Learn to Write Aramaic

a step-by-step approach to the historical and modern scripts

Joshua Rudder

LEARN TO WRITE ARAMAIC

A step-by-step approach to writing the Aramaic scripts

Joshua Rudder

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INTRODUCTION

The Aramaic language has been written continuously for over 3,000 years in a wide range of scripts. Despite the amount of variation in the written language, you can ease yourself into writing Aramaic without much trouble for two reasons. First, every form of written Aramaic ultimately derives from the same early script, so all Aramaic scripts share many common features. Second, we can simplify the situation by classifying the Aramaic scripts into three basic types: the early script, the square script and the cursive script.

This workbook eases you into the complexities of writing Aramaic in a step-by-step fashion. Over the course of this book, you will learn to write the basic versions of the square script and the cursive script. You will approach these two scripts in manageable chunks. For starters, you will learn to write individual letters. Then, you will learn to modify those letters and build syllables out of them. Finally, you will put syllables together in words, phrases, and simple sentences.

After learning the basic square and cursive scripts, you will have the opportunity to study and practice the early Aramaic script. You will also meet historical versions of the scripts. This unique experience will give you direct access to specific scripts throughout history and allow you to identify and approach historical manuscripts and inscriptions.

Within each section, I keep my explanations short and provide clear Aramaic examples. A line beside or beneath each Aramaic example allows you to copy the text for practice. Exercises accompany many explanations and provide simple experience relevant to the topic just learned.

Practice pages are found throughout the workbook. These pages offer information about each letter, including the letter's name, transliteration and pronunciation in IPA. They also indicate the number and direction of pen strokes that compose each character. Each practice page also offers ruled and boxed writing space to copy letters over and again until you get them just right.

Layout

Following this introduction, you will find a chart comparing the various Aramaic scripts in this workbook. Beyond that, the bulk of the book divides its attention between the Assyrian Aramaic cursive script and the Jewish Aramaic square script. The breakdown is far from arbitrary, since the principles covered for the square and cursive scripts apply to the other varieties of the script.

After introducing the square and cursive scripts, the workbook teaches other ways of writing Aramaic. Further practice sections cover the Early Aramaic script, the Imperial Aramaic script, the Herodian script, Hebrew cursive and the Western (Serto) and Eastern Assyrian scripts.

Assuming you do not plan to complete this entire course and learn every script, I can suggest two pathways through the book. Path 1: once you learn the classical square script, you are prepared for the Hebrew cursive, Herodian, Imperial Aramaic and Early Aramaic scripts. Path 2: once you learn the classical cursive script, you can tackle the modern Serto and Eastern scripts. You will also find that the basic cursive and square scripts share much common ground.

The first appendix contains a handy pronunciation guide, and the second offers answers to the exercises. I have also included a short index at the end of the book.

Varieties of Written Aramaic

The term "Aramaic" covers a bewildering network of dialects that span a long stretch of history. While even a modest overview of the history and diffusion of Aramic is beyond the scope of this book, the following brief summary of written Aramaic may suffice.

Aramaic speakers borrowed their alphabet from the Phoenicians, themselves fellow Semitic speakers. Extant **Early Aramaic** stone inscriptions testify to the extensive use of this Aramaic alphabet more than 3000 years ago. The language spread to Mesopotamia at an early date, and a highly standardized **Imperial Aramaic** became the language of the Achaemenid or Persian Empire more than 2500 years ago.

Aramaic then spread throughout the Middle East as a written and spoken *lingua franca*. Hebrew speakers borrowed Imperial Aramaic and its evolving **square script**. That square script took many forms over the centuries, including the noteworthy **Herodian script** of the Roman period. The square script is still used to write both Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic, and birthed a popular **Hebrew cursive script** in modern times.

Separately, a distinct version of Aramaic lettering appeared in Syrian monuments more than 2000 years ago. This variant quickly developed into the unique **Estrangela cursive script** attested in numerous early Syrian Christian manuscripts. The cursive script in turn developed into the Western **Serto** and Eastern **Madnhaya** scripts used by Assyrian Christians from the Middle Ages to the present.

The diversity sketched above presents a challenge for the present workbook, whose aim it is to introduce the major varieties of written Aramaic from the earliest inscriptions to the present. In this manual, I simplify the matter by using the undifferentiated term "Aramaic", and only

apply a more precise attribute like Modern Aramaic, Jewish Neo-Aramaic or Western Assyrian Aramaic when the distinction makes a difference to the beginning learner of a particular script.

Examples within each section present only words and phrases native to the script being taught. You will not find Syriac words within the section teaching you to write the square script, nor will you see Targumic and Jewish Neo-Aramaic words written in the Estrangela script. However, the examples draw indiscriminately from both ancient and modern forms of Aramaic. That is, you will meet Targumic and Jewish Neo-Aramaic words written in the square script. You will likewise see Classical Syriac and Assyrian Neo-Aramaic examples in the cursive script.

Most Aramaic examples in the square script section come from the classical language, and may be checked against Marcus Jastrow's *Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud and Midrashic Literature.* Words in the cursive section have diverse origins. Classical Syriac words may be found in a thorough lexicon like E. Payne Smith's *A Compedious Syriac Dictionary,* while many modern items can be found in the Association Assyrophile de France's online *Sureth Dictionary*. I do not take time to explain the differences between ancient and modern words, as these examples offer fodder for practice rather than a thorough exposition of Aramaic vocabulary and grammar.

That said, this workbook does present a thorough introduction to the intricacies of the writing system. After completing all the copy practice sheets and activities in this workbook, the learner of Aramaic can expect a strong foundation for future studies.

Writing Aramaic has an online component at www.nativlang.com/aramaic-language. Visit the website to hear Aramaic letter names pronounced aloud and see the alphabet written by hand in each script.

Comparison of Aramaic Scripts

Aramaic Alphabets

square scripts *cursive scripts*

	Early *(p. 115)*	**Imperial** *(p. 129)*	**Herodian** *(p. 143)*	**Square** (classical) *(p. 9)*	**Hebrew cursive** *(p. 157)*	**Estrangela** (classical) *(p. 59)*	**Serto** *(p. 173)*	**Madnhaya** *(p. 191)*
ʾ				א				
b				ב				
g				ג				
d				ד				
h				ה				
w				ו				
z				ז				
ḥ				ח				
ṭ				ט				
y				י				
k				כ				
l				ל				
m				מ				
n				נ				
s				ס				
ʿ				ע				
p				פ				
ṣ				צ				
q				ק				
r				ר				
sh				ש				
t				ת				

Vowels

	Square	Estrangela	Serto	Madnhaya
ă	בֲ			
ĕ	בֱ			
ŏ	בֳ			
a	בַ	ܒ	ܒ̰	ܒ
ā	בָ	ܒ	ܒ̄	ܒ
e	בֶ	ܒ	ܒ̤	ܒ
ē	בֵ	ܒ		ܒ
i	בִ			
ī	בִי	ܒ	ܒ̈	ܒ
o	בֹ			
ō	בוֹ	ܒ		ܒ
u	בֻ			
ū	בוּ	ܒ	ܒ̈	ܒ

Vowels marked on the letter ב ܒ *(beth).*

Distinct Final Consonant Forms

	Square	Hebrew cursive	Estrangela	Serto	Madnhaya
ṭ				ܛ	
k	ך	ך	ܟ	ܟ	ܟ ܟ
l				ܠ	
m	ם	ם	ܡ	ܡ	ܡ
n	ן	ן	ܢ ܢ	ܢ ܢ	ܢ ܢ
s			ܤ		
ʿ				ܥ	
p	ף	ף			
ṣ	ץ	ץ			
t				ܬ	

The Judeo-Aramaic Square Script

א

אָלֶף

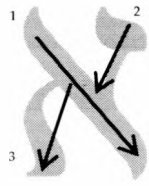
ʾalaph

transliteration

ʾ

pronunciation

/ʔ/



← *copy direction*

ב

בית

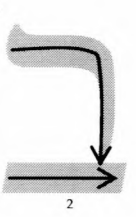
beth

transliteration

b

pronunciation

/b/



							ב

ג

גמל

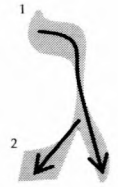
gammel

transliteration

g

pronunciation

/g/



							ג

ד

דלת

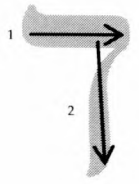
dalath

transliteration

d

pronunciation

/d/



							ד

ה

הא

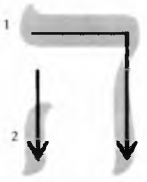
he

transliteration

h

pronunciation

/h/



							ה

ו

וו

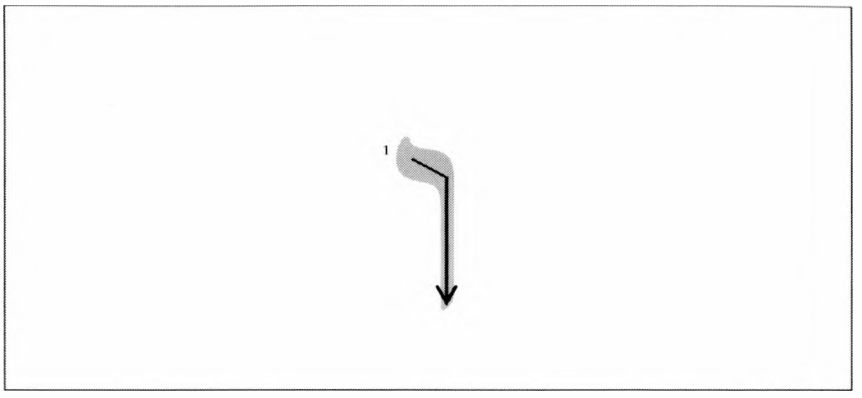
waw

transliteration

w or v

pronunciation

/w/



ז

זַיִן

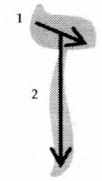
zayin

transliteration

z

pronunciation

/z/



ח

חחח

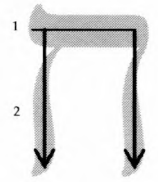
ḥeth

transliteration

ḥ or kh or ch

pronunciation

/ħ/ ~ /x/



ט

טית

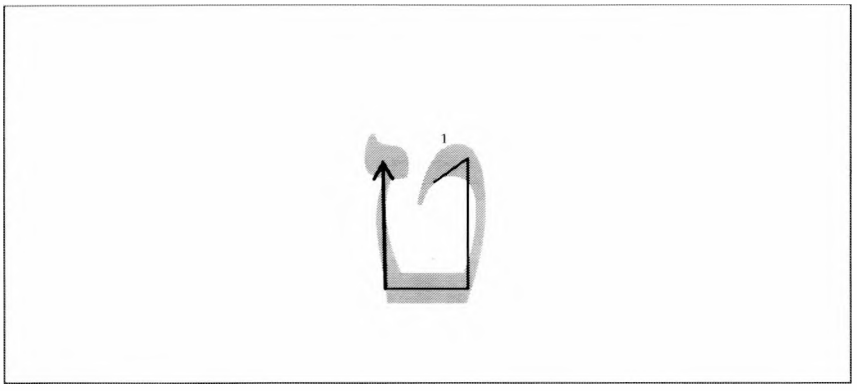
ṭeth

transliteration

ṭ

pronunciation

/tˤ/



ט

י

יוד

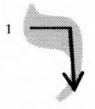
yudh

transliteration

y

pronunciation

/j/



							י

כ

כף

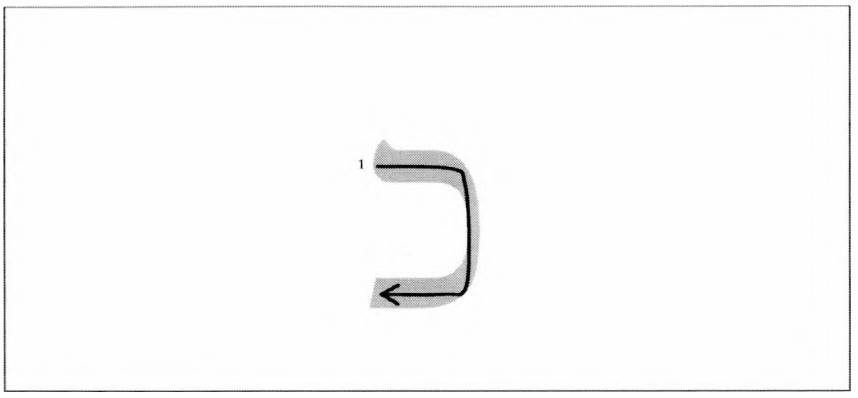
kaph

transliteration

k

pronunciation

/k/



ל

למד

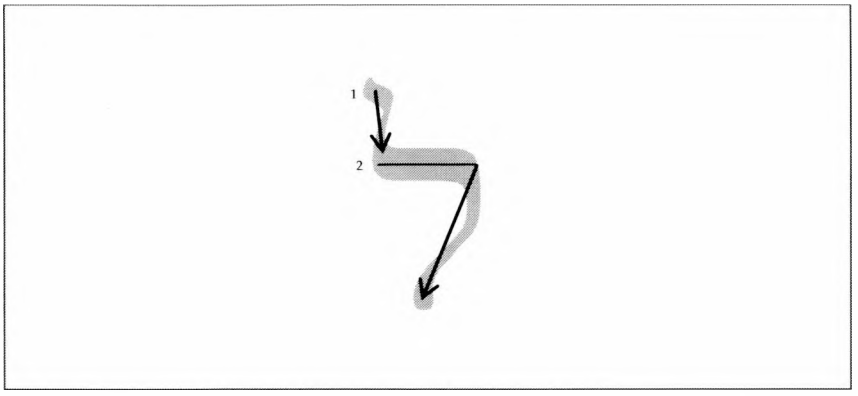
lammadh

transliteration

l

pronunciation

/l/



מ

מים

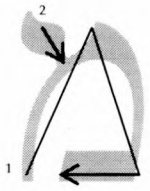
mim

transliteration

m

pronunciation

/m/



							מ

נ

נון

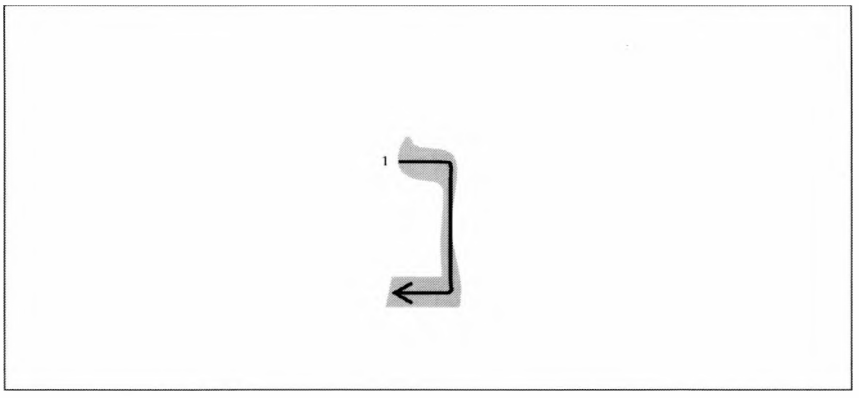
nun

transliteration

n

pronunciation

/n/



							נ

ס

סמכת

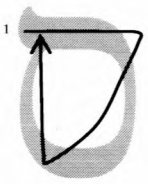
semkath

transliteration

s

pronunciation

/s/



ס

ע

עין

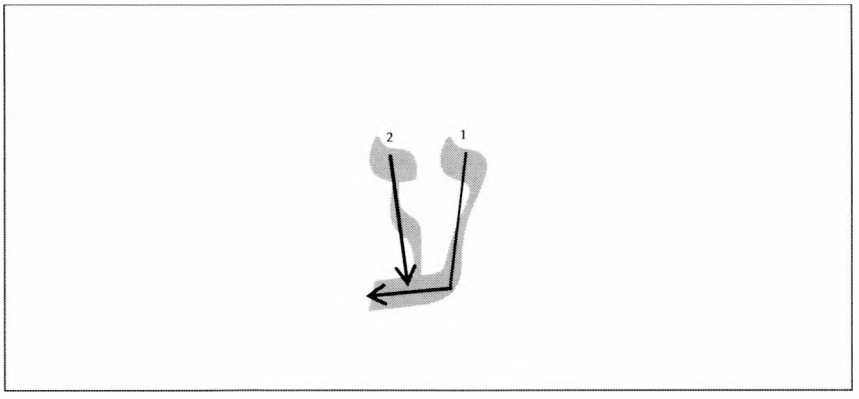
ʿayin

transliteration

ʿ

pronunciation

/ʕ/



							ע

פ

פא

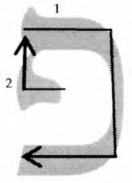
pe

transliteration

p

pronunciation

/p/



צ

צדי

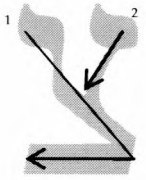
ṣadhe

transliteration

ṣ or ts or tz

pronunciation

/sˤ/ ~ /s/



ק

קוף

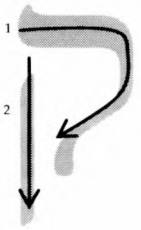
qoph

transliteration

q or ḳ

pronunciation

/q/



							קן

ר

ריש

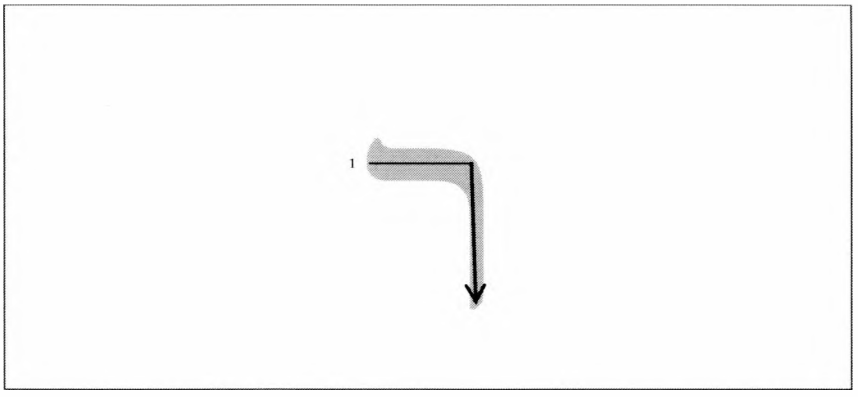
resh

transliteration

r

pronunciation

/r/



ש

שין

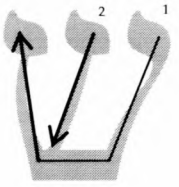
shin

transliteration

sh or š

pronunciation

/ʃ/



ת

תו

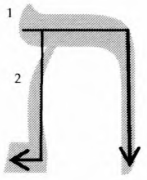
taw

transliteration

t

pronunciation

/t/



							ת

The Aramaic *alaph-beth* (alphabet) serves as a valuable study aid, but it also has immense historical and cultural significance. The Aramaic square script long ago replaced the earlier Paleo-Hebrew as the script of choice for writing Hebrew, and has since become the standard script of Jewish languages such as Yiddish, Ladino and Neo-Aramaic.

The letters of the alphabet represent consonants, while vowels are traditionally inferred. Copy the entire alphabet six times to learn the traditional order of the 22 Aramaic letters. Pay attention to pen strokes and the composition of each character as you practice.

א

ב

ג

ד

ה

ו

ז

ח

ט

י

כ

ל

מ

נ

ס

ע						
פ						
צ						
ק						
ר						
ש						
ת						

Direction of Writing

Aramaic letters are written and read from right to left.

midrāsh	(sh-r-d-m)	*school*	מדרש
			_____
bar	(r-b)	*son*	בר
			_____

Notice that transliterations written in the Roman alphabet are still read from left to right.

midrāsh	_____	מדרש

Syllables

Aramaic scripts revolve around consonants. The basic Aramaic syllable contains one consonant plus one vowel, or CV. Words often end in consonants, having a final syllable of the type CVC. The square script indicates only consonants in its basic form. In other words, you must infer vowels because *th scrpt s wrttn ths wy*.

midrāsh	_____	מדרש

Aramaic distinguishes between the vowels *a, e, i, o* and *u*.

bar	בר	**sleq**	סלק
	_____	*to leave*	_____
migdal	מגדל		
turret	_____		
kol	כול	**kulab**	כולב
all	_____	*axe*	_____

Aramaic has both long and short vowels. Short vowels like *a* differ from long vowels like *ā*.

geshem *body* גשם slēq *to leave* סלק

_____ _____

Two consonants may occur side by side, as in a syllable of the type CCV. In these cases, we infer no vowel whatsoever between the multiple consonants.

migdal _____ מגדל

Exercise 1

Practice reading and writing Aramaic words in the square script. Each word on the left transliterates one square script word on the right. Match each square script word with its corresponding transliteration. Once you have finished matching, take the time to rewrite each word on the blank lines provided.

1.	madbaq	*welding*	לבש	_____
2.	hadās	*Edessa*	טלל	_____
3.	ṣrar	*to tie up*	מדבק	_____
4.	ptaq	*to throw*	על	_____
5.	nṭal	*to carry*	נטל	_____
6.	ḥagag	*to feast*	צרר	_____
7.	ṭlal	*to cover*	חגג	_____
8.	shnaq	*to strangle*	פתק	_____
9.	ʿal	*(up)on*	הדס	_____
10.	lbēsh	*to be dressed*	שנק	_____

Special Letter Forms

The square script has special final forms when certain letters fall at the end of a word. For example, compare the two forms of the letter כ *kaph* below.

ktab	*to write*	כתב	ḥashok	*to be dark*	חשוך

There are five consonants with unique final forms.

Final כ *kaph*	ḥashok	*to be dark*	חשוך
Final מ *mim*	kla**m**	*to be shamed*	כלם
Final נ *nun*	qru**n**	*read (it)!*	קרון
Final פ *pe*	qṭa**p**	*to pluck*	קטף
Final צ *ṣadhe*	du**ṣ**	*to dance*	דוץ

Over the next five pages, practice writing the distinct final forms of these letters. Notice that most final forms contain one long downward stroke that dips below the writing line.

ך

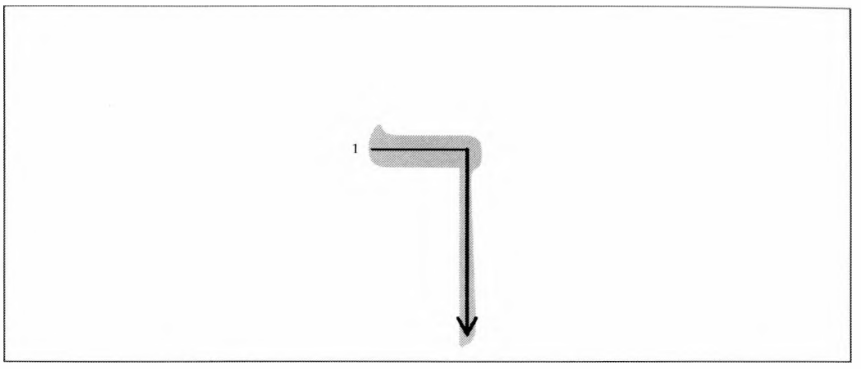
final kaph

transliteration

k

pronunciation

/k/



ם

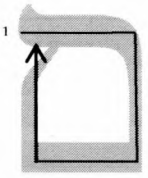
final mim

transliteration

m

pronunciation

/m/



							ם

ן

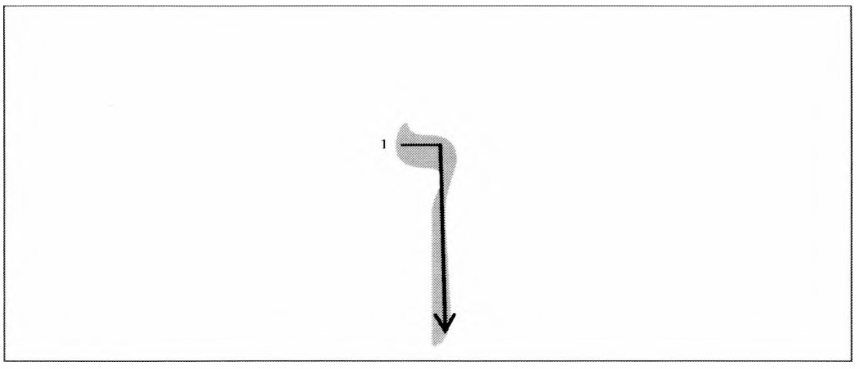
final nun

transliteration

n

pronunciation

/n/



ף

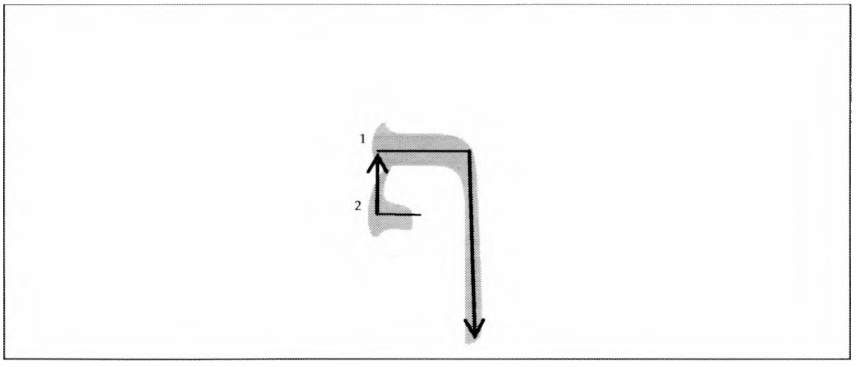
final pe

transliteration

p

pronunciation

/p/



ץ

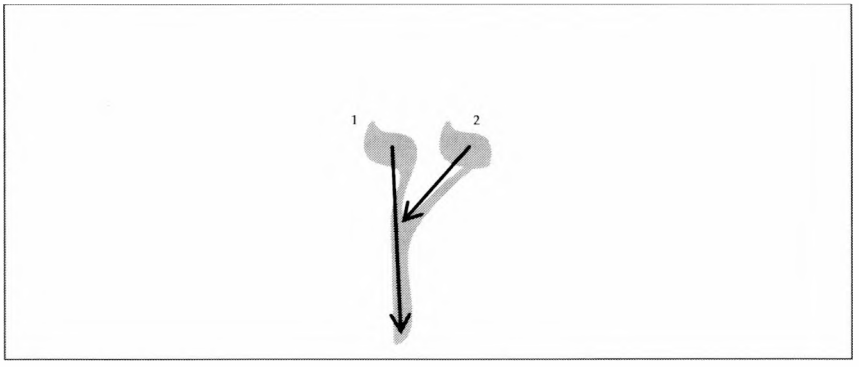
final ṣadhe

transliteration

ṣ

pronunciation

/sˤ/ ~ /s/



Vowels Represented by Letters

There are two ways to represent vowels in the square script. The first is essential to the correct spelling of words, and employs the consonants א *ʾalaph*, ו *waw* and י *yudh* to represent (mostly long) vowels. These helpful vowel letters are called *matres lectionis*, Latin for *mothers of reading*.

א	*ā*	kār	כאר
		ability	_____
י	*ē* or *ī*	zīzā	זיזא
		projection	_____
		zētā	זיתא
		olive	_____
ו	*o* or *u*	zābonā	זבונא
		buyer/merchant	_____
		duknā	דוכנא
		lectern	_____

At the end of a word, the matres א *ʾalaph*, ה *he*, ו *waw* and י *yudh* usually represent a final vowel.

final א *ʾalaph*	(often *ā*)	kalbā	כלבא
		dog	_____
final ה *he*	(often *ē*; also *ā*)	miṣwā	מצוה
		duty	_____
final י *yudh*	(often *ē* or *ī*)	bētī	ביתי
		my house	_____
final ו *waw*	(*o* or *u*)	u	ו
		and	_____

Vowels Represented by Special Marks

The second way to represent vowels is optional but extremely helpful for learners. A system of dots and dashes placed below, beside or above individual letters allows you to supply the exact vowel when reading or writing the script. This supplemental system is known as *vowel pointing*. The basics of this system are presented below. (The capital letter C represents any consonant.)

C**a** (bar below)	b**a**r	בַּד
	son	_____
C**ā** (down tack below)	yam**ā**	יָמָּא
	ocean	_____
C**e** (three dots below)	g**e**shem	גֶּשֶׁם
	body	_____
C**ē** (two dots below)	sl**ē**q	סלֵק
	to leave	_____
C**i** (one dot below)	m**i**n	מִן
	from	_____
C**ī** (one dot below + *yod*)	mdīntā	מדִינתָא
	city	_____
C**o** (*waw* with dot above)	ʿ**o**lām	עוֹלם
	world	_____
C**u** (*waw* with dot beside)	q**u**n	קרוּן
	read!	_____

Modern Aramaic writers routinely spell *ā* as א *ʾalaph* in the middle of native words, but not within words recently borrowed from Hebrew.

ʿolām	עוֹלָם	midrāsh	מִדְרָשׁ
world	_____	*school*	_____

When a consonant is followed by no vowel whatsoever, two vertical dots are placed below that consonant. This useful symbol is called a *shwa*.

C (two vertical dots below)	malkā	מַלְכָא
	king	_____
	mdīn**t**ā	מְדִינְתָא
	city	_____

In some cases, a speaker may pronounce a shwa rather than leave it absolutely silent. An audible shwa is pronounced like the *a* in the English word *above* and transliterated by the symbol *ə*.

shwā ~ **sh**əwā שְׁוָא

_____

A shwa sometimes appears directly to the right of another vowel mark. In these cases, the shwa dots indicate that the vowel is "hurried" or pronounced very short.

ḥăshok	חֲשׁוֹךְ	**ʾĕ**guzā	אֱגוֹזָא
to be dark	_____	*nut*	_____

When a word ends in a consonant, the final consonant is typically written without a shwa. A clear exception is final ך *kaph*, whose obligatory shwa appears to the left instead of below.

ḥăsho**k**	חֲשׁוֹךְ	geshe**m**	גֶּשֶׁם
	_____		_____

Use the following pages to practice writing vowel pointing on the Aramaic consonants ש *shin* and נ *nun*. Notice that vowel pointing occurs *along with* and *not instead of* matres lectionis. Also note that vowel marks comprise the last stroke(s) of a character.

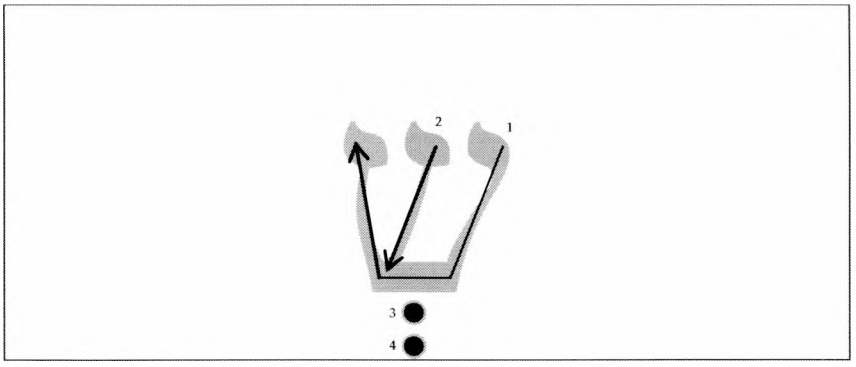
shwa

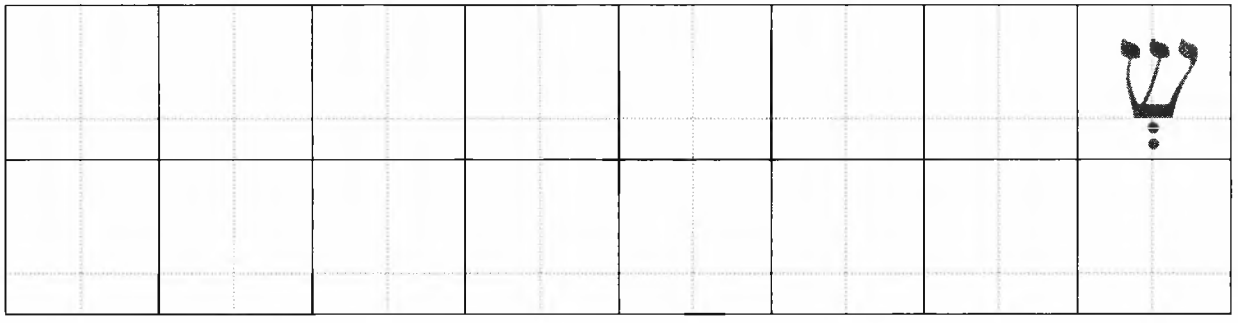
transliteration

ə or (nothing)

pronunciation

(silent)





ḥaṭeph səghol

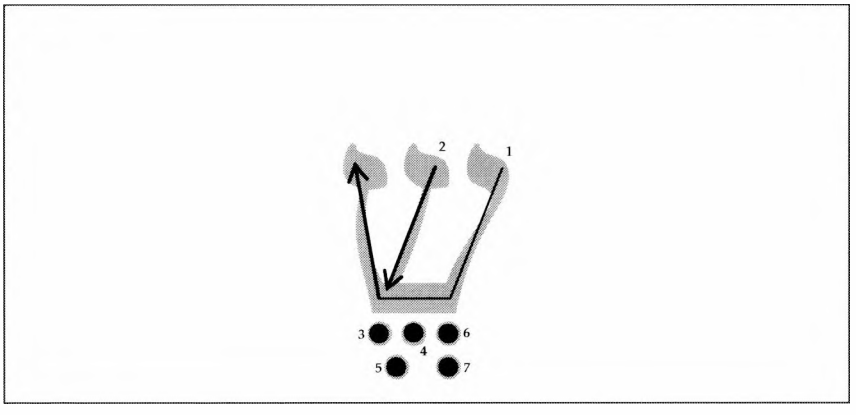
transliteration

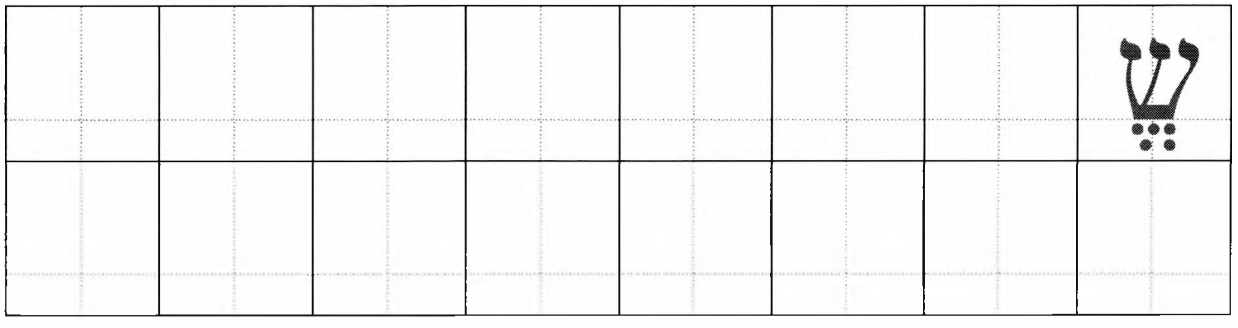
ĕ

pronunciation

/ɛ/

Modern Aramaic: /e/





ḥaṭeph pathaḥ

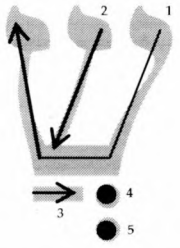
transliteration

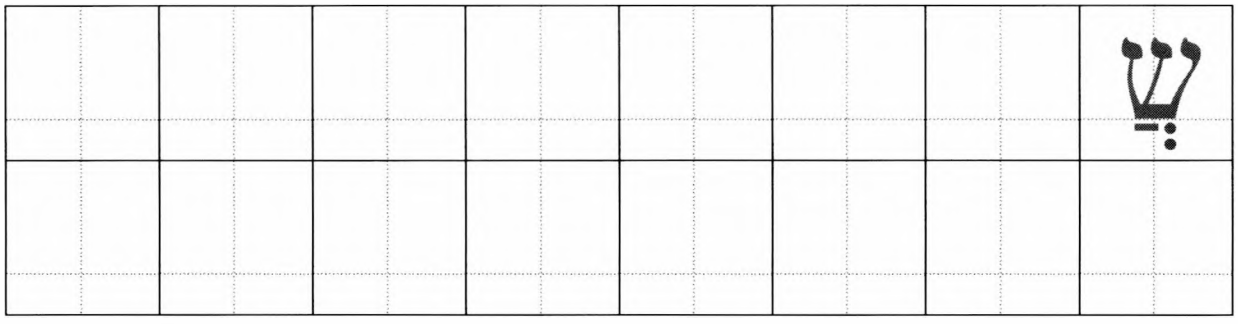
ă

pronunciation

/ɐ/

Modern Aramaic: /a/





ḥaṭeph qameṣ

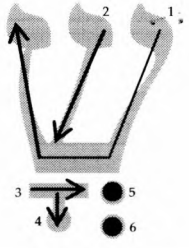
transliteration

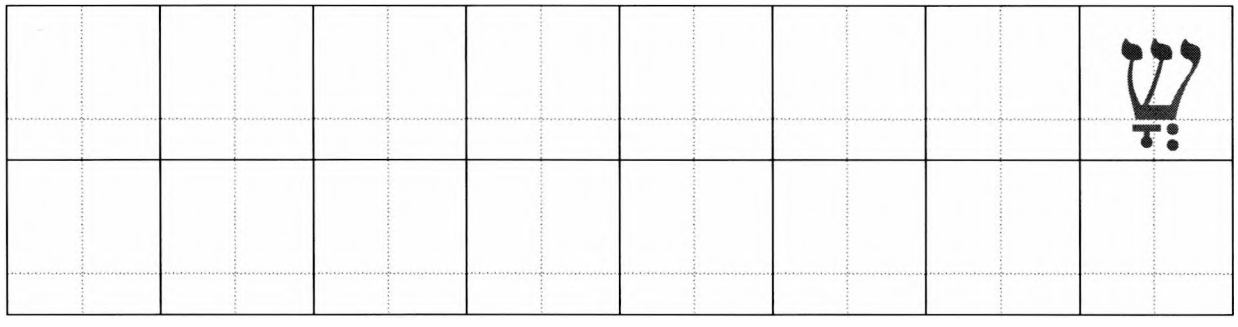
ŏ

pronunciation

/ɔ/

Modern Aramaic: /o/





ִ

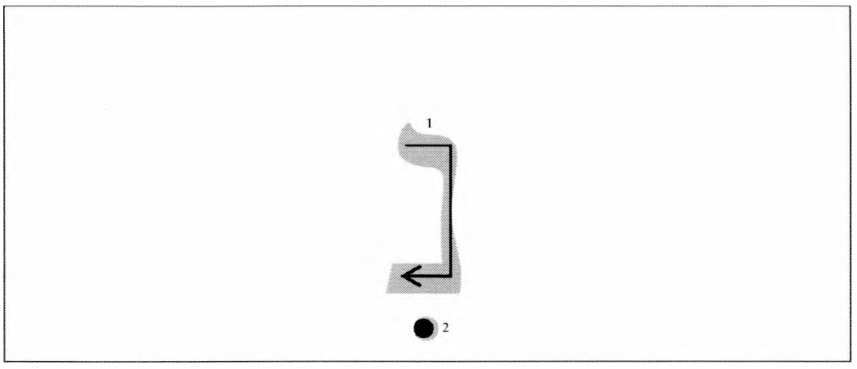
ḥireq

transliteration

i

pronunciation

/i/



							בִ

ֵ

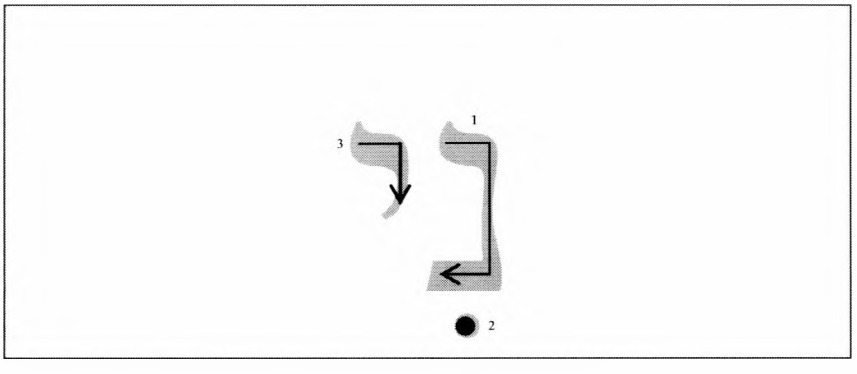
ḥireq male

transliteration

ī

pronunciation

/i:/



							בֵי

ֵ

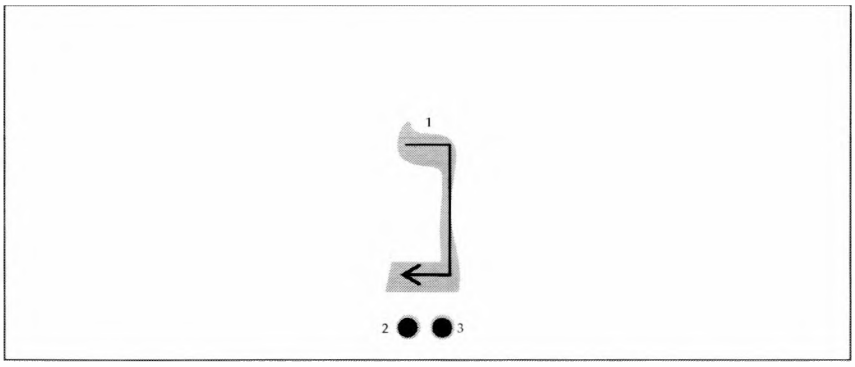
ṣere

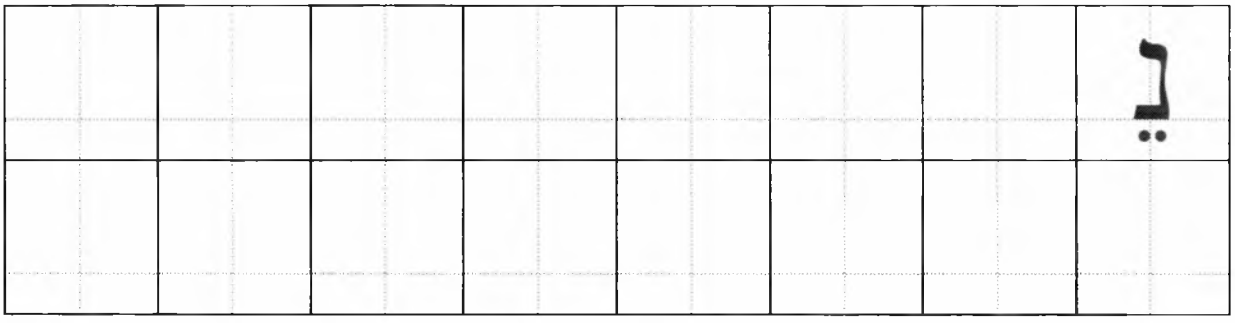
transliteration

ē

pronunciation

/eː/





ֵ

səghol

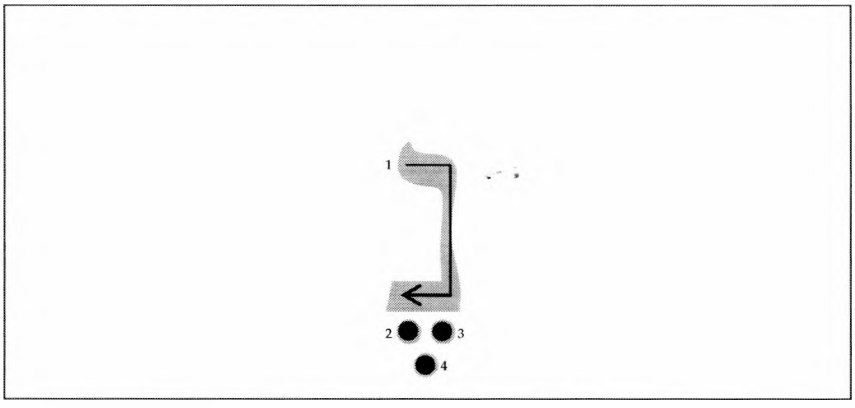
transliteration

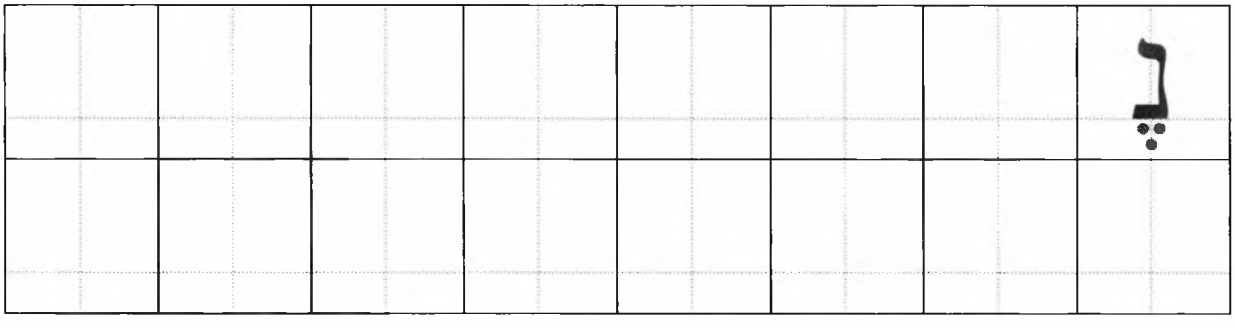
e

pronunciation

/ɛ/ ~ /ɛː/

Modern Aramaic: /e/





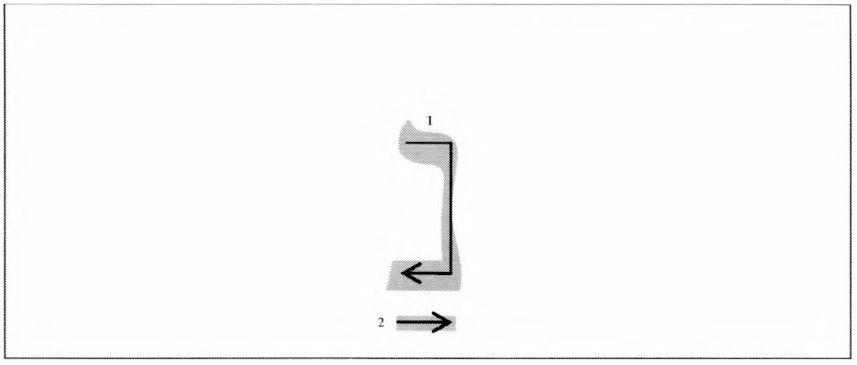
pathaḥ

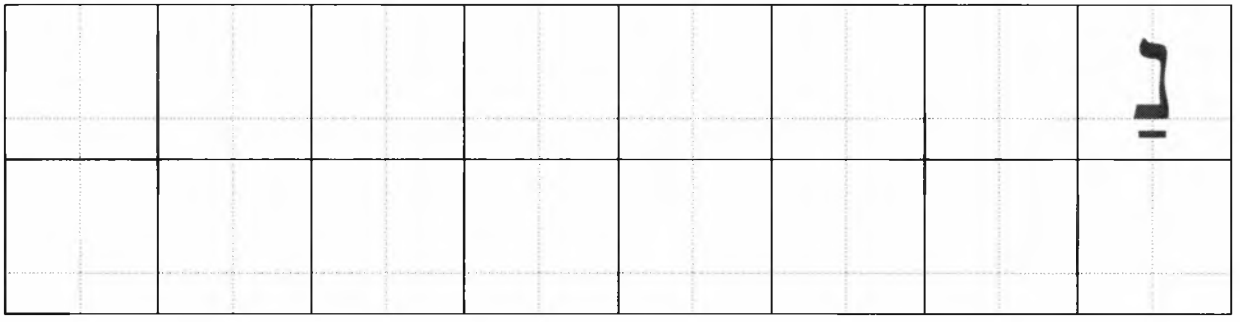
transliteration

a

pronunciation

/a/





qameṣ

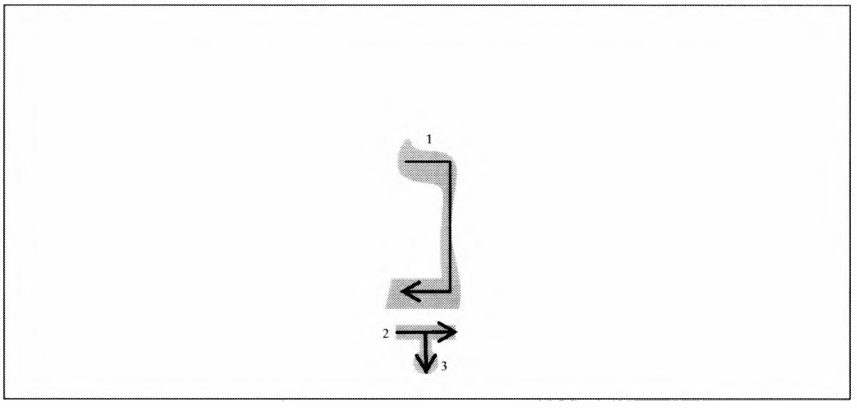
transliteration

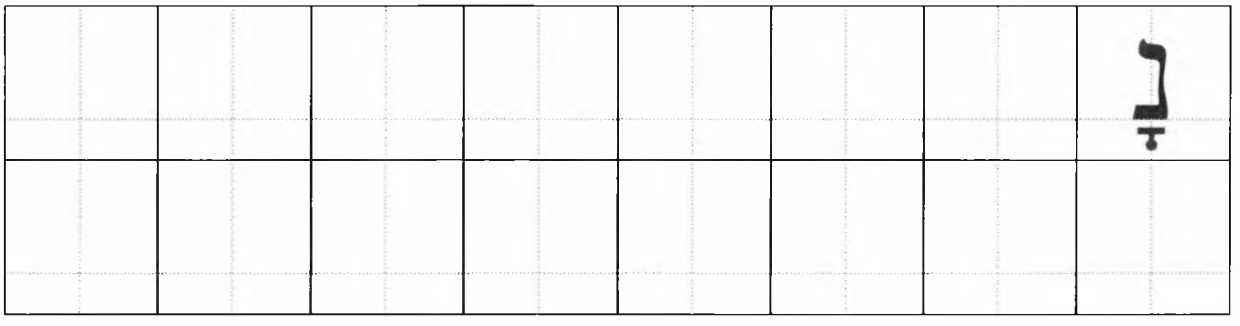
ā

pronunciation

/aː/ ~ /ɔː/

Modern Aramaic: /aː/





ֹ

ḥolem

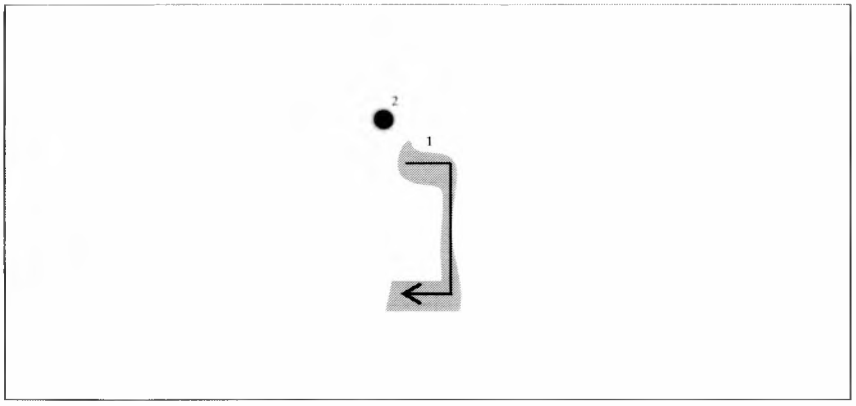
transliteration

ō or o

pronunciation

/o:/

Modern Aramaic: /o/



Note: ḥolem male (below) is preferred and more common.

							בֹ

וֹ

ḥolem male

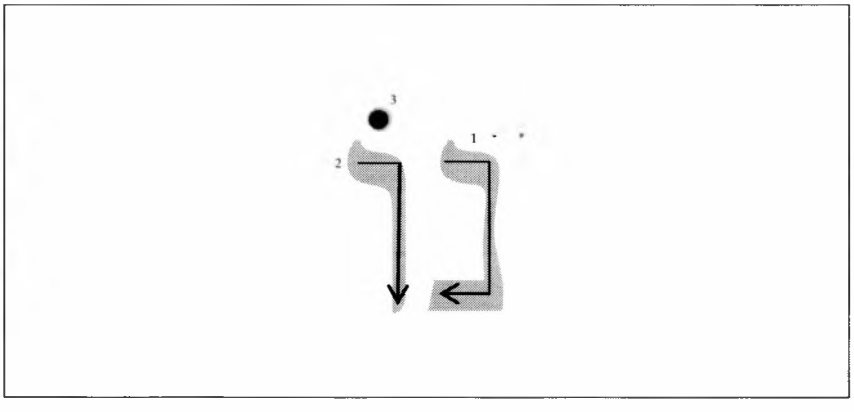
transliteration

ō or o

pronunciation

/o:/

Modern Aramaic: /o/ or /o:/



							בוֹ

בֻּ

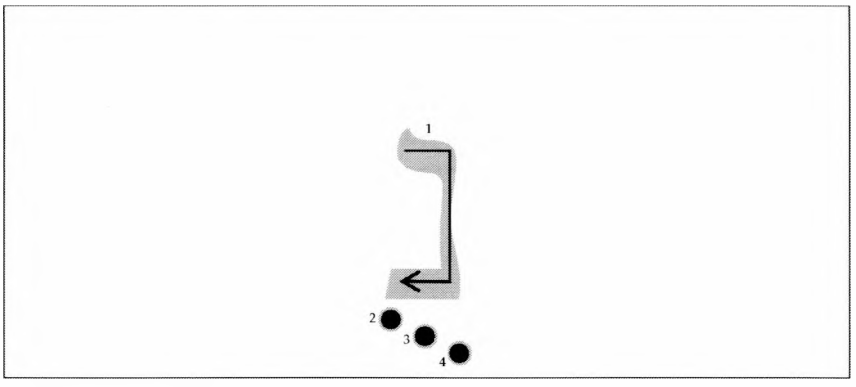
qubbuṣ

transliteration

u

pronunciation

/u:/ ~ /u/



Note: shureq (below) is preferred and more common.

בֻּ

בוּ

shureq

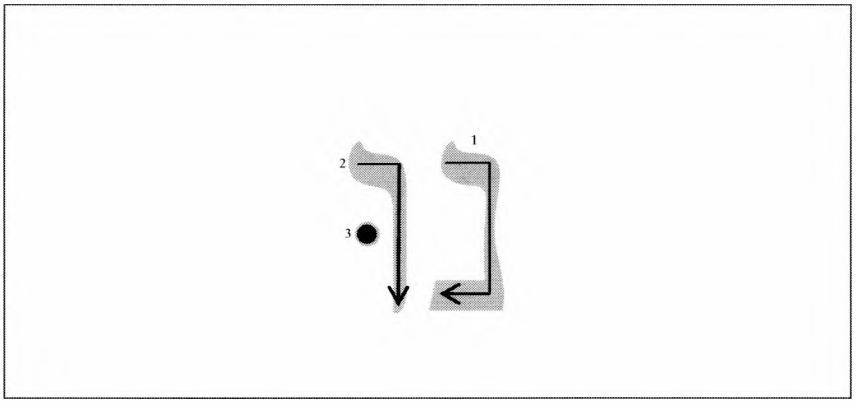
transliteration

ū or u

pronunciation

/u:/

Modern Aramaic: /u/ or /u:/



בוּ

Exercise 2

Use the words in this activity to cultivate your understanding of Aramaic vowels. In the first half of the exercise, copy and transliterate each word written in the square script. Pay close attention to the vowels in your transliterations.

1. בֵּיתָא *house* _____ *transliteration:*
2. טְעֵים *to taste* _____ *transliteration:*
3. זוֹנָרָא *belt* _____ *transliteration:*
4. בוּעֲתָא *abscess* _____ *transliteration:*
5. חוּרְפָן *young lambs* _____ *transliteration:*
6. אִתְכַּדִּין *be shown false* _____ *transliteration:*

The second half of this exercise presents transliterated Aramaic words. Write each transliterated word twice in the square script. Include vowel pointing in your transliterations.

7. sīʿa *to assist* _____ _____
8. yāylā *hedgehog* _____ _____
9. barzəlā *iron* _____ _____
10. ʿătak *to be old* _____ _____
11. qīqeltā *ruins* _____ _____
12. ṣuqtā *distress* _____ _____

Modified Consonants Represented by Special Marks

Aramaic has two types of consonants: *soft* consonants and *hard* consonants. Hard consonants are pronounced as stops, soft consonants as fricatives. A dot known as *dagesh* placed inside a letter represents the hard pronunciation.

בּ	b	ב	v	/v/ in ***veer*** or /w/ in ***wine***
גּ	g	ג	gh	/ɣ/ like a voiced *h* (most modern: same as גּ)
דּ	d	ד	dh	/ð/ in ***this*** (most modern: same as דּ)
כּ	k	כ	kh	/x/ in ***loch*** (an *h* sound at top of throat)
פּ	p	פ	ph	/f/ in *fair*
תּ	t	ת	th	/θ/ in ***thing***

Soft consonants may be transliterated with an *h* after the normal consonant letter (*th, ph* and so on) or a line beneath (*t, p,* etc.). I have used this convention in letter names like ***kaph*** and *qo**ph**,* but our examples have so far failed to distinguish between the soft and hard pronunciation of consonants. Now we can represent them in the script and in transliterations.

bēthā	בֵּיתָא	**tvāv**	תְּבָב
house	_____	*to saw*	_____

Double consonants occur in the middle of some words. Double consonants are pronounced long but written as a single consonant.

ʿabbā	אַבָּא	**ḥănukkā**	חֲנוּכָּה
father	_____	*Hanukkah*	_____

When using dagesh, a dot is placed inside doubled consonants.

ʿabbā	אַבָּא	**ḥănukkā**	חֲנוּכָּה
	_____		_____

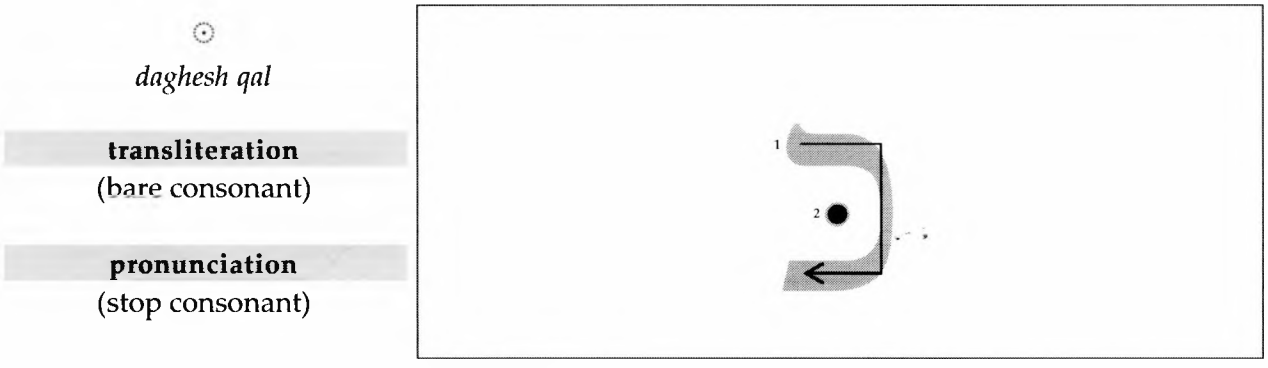
Modern Aramaic printers sometimes mark a soft consonant by placing a small dot above it.

bēthā	בֵּיתָא		
house	_____		

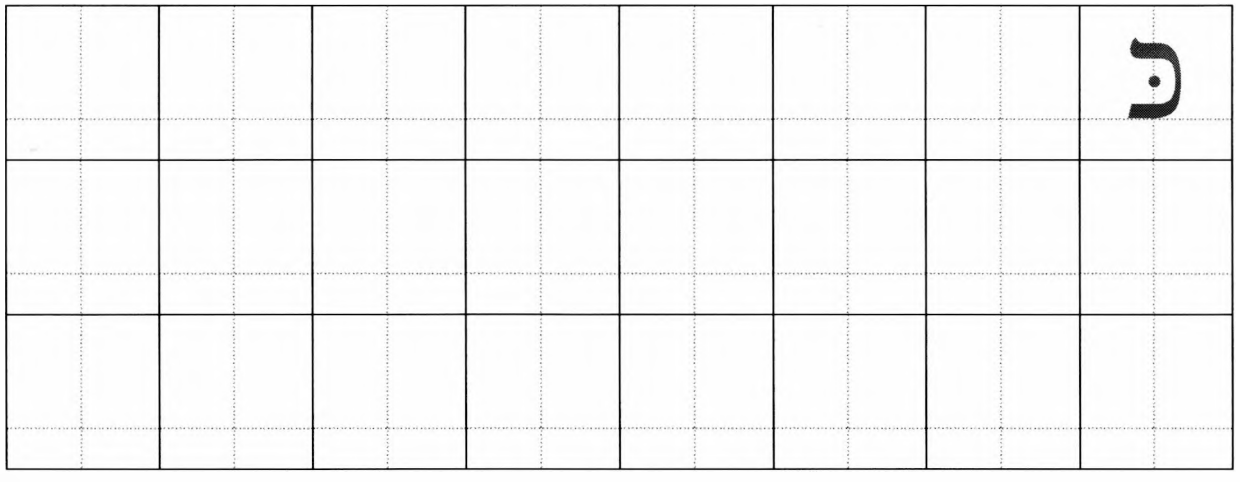
Sometimes printed Aramaic includes a small dot on the upper right of the letter שׁ *shin*. This dot serves to differentiate shin from the Hebrew letter שׂ *sin* (with dot on the left side), which is pronounced /s/ just like ס *semkath*. The letter שׁ *shin* is native to Aramaic; שׂ *sin* is not.

səlāw	שְׂלָו	**sh**lāmā	שְׁלָמָא
quail (Hebrew)	_____	*peace*	_____

Practice writing consonant diacritics in the copy section below, then complete the exercise that follows. Notice that a diacritic dot comprises the last pen stroke of the letter.



Note: only found on plosives b, d, g, p, t, k

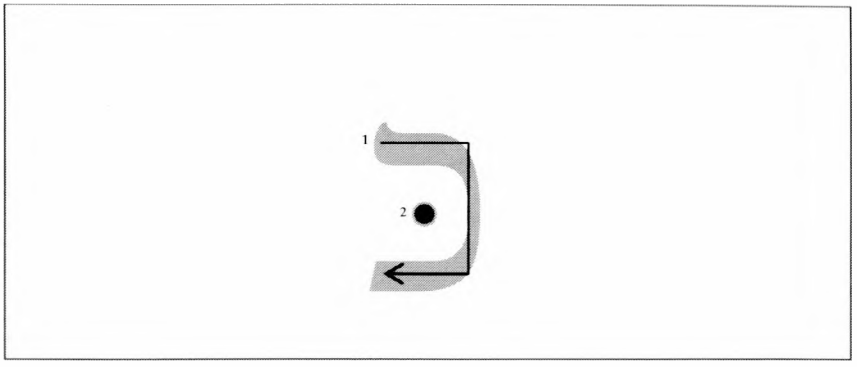


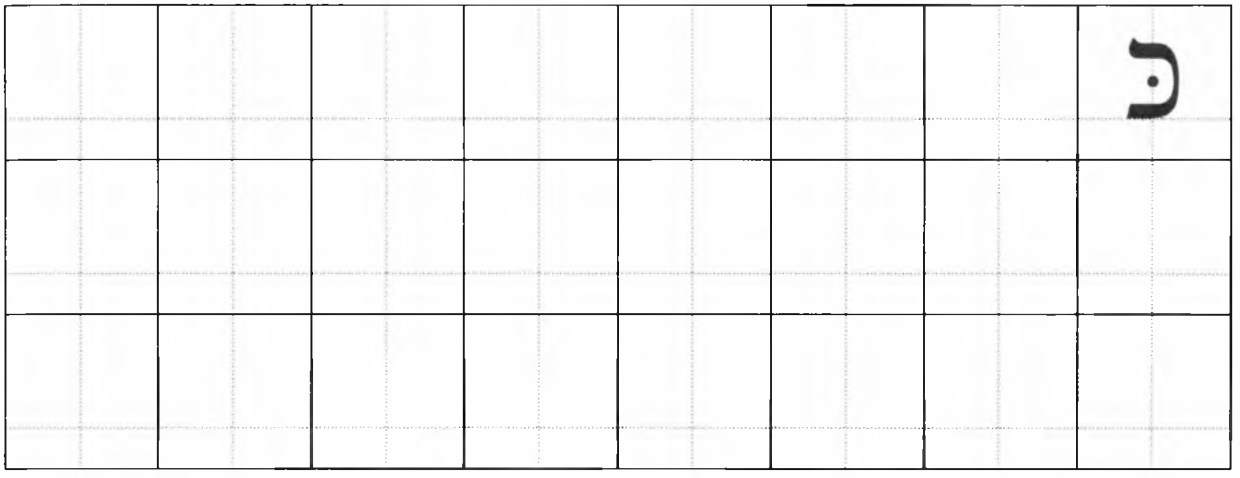
⊙

daghesh ḥazaq

transliteration
(doubled consonant)

pronunciation
(doubled consonant)



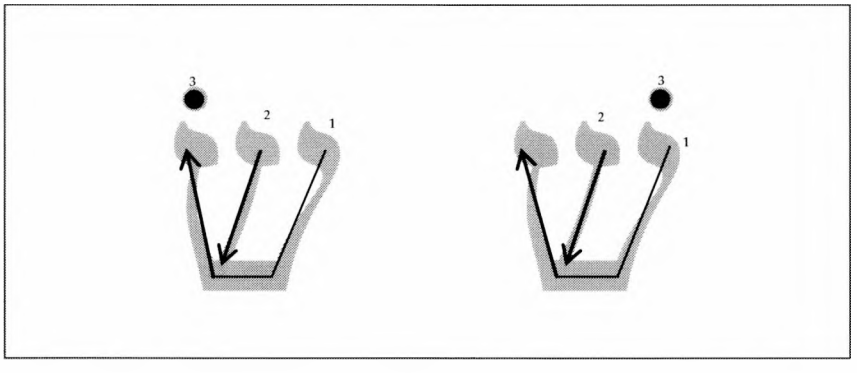


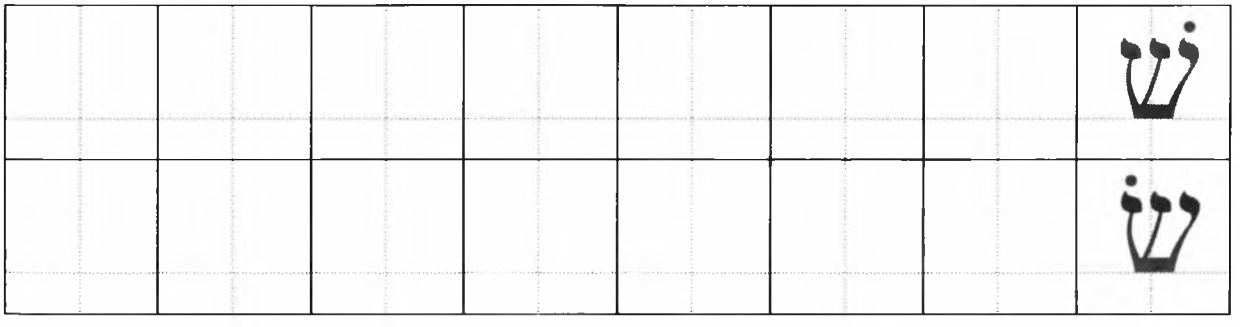
שׁ / שׂ

shin / *sin*

transliteration
sh / s

pronunciation
/ʃ/ versus /s/





Exercise 3

Aramaic words from the last exercise are mixed with new words, all of them transliterated below. The transliterations now include information about hard, soft and double consonants. Rewrite every word twice in the square script. Use vowel and consonant diacritics.

1.	ʾithkadcn	*be proved wrong*	_____	_____
2.	qīqeltā	*ruins*	_____	_____
3.	bēthā	*house*	_____	_____
4.	ḥurphā	*young lamb*	_____	_____
5.	dəmā	*blood (Classical)*	_____	_____
6.	dəmma	*blood (Modern)*	_____	_____
7.	yallolīn	*monsters*	_____	_____
8.	lāvān	*white*	_____	_____
9.	ḥăshakh	*be reduced*	_____	_____
10.	buʿăthā	*abscess*	_____	_____

You have seen how to read and write words in the square script. You have also learned to represent specific vowels and hard, soft and doubled consonants in this script. You can now begin to build phrases and sentences out of words. Like letters, words are read from right to left. Individual Aramaic words are separated from one another by a blank space, a technique used in written Aramaic since ancient times.

īttā u-gavrā	אִיתְּתָא וּגַבְרָא
woman and man	

In traditional documents, Aramaic does not employ punctuation to clarify the structure of a text.

הונא אין לווין על שער שבשוק אמר ליה רב יוסף בר חמא לרב ששת ואמרי לה רב יוסי
בר אבא לרב ששת ומי אמר רב הונא הכי והא בעי מיניה מרב הונא הני בני בי רב
דיזפי בתשרי ופרעי בטבת שרי או אסיר אמר להו הא חיטי בהיני והא חיטי בשי
אי בעי זבני ופרעי ליה מעיקרא סבר רב הונא אין לוין כיון דשמעה להא דאמר רב

A block of text excerpted from the Babylonian Talmud. Notice the lack of punctuation.

Medieval and modern texts, particularly those of religious significance, frequently make use of Hebrew punctuation and a complex system of cantillation marks. Symbols include *soph pasuq* (׃) to mark the end of a sentence or verse, *maqqeph* (־) to link or hyphenate words, *geresh* (׳) to abbreviate words and *gershayim* (״) to indicate an acronym or distinguish words.

שקדמו לא בטיל לענין אחריות׃ לא
ניתן ליכתב - מאחר שנתנו כבר
במתנה, ועל כרחו כתבו ליה זה׃ להא
שמעתא - דרבא׃ נימא לא ניתן ליכתב

Commentary on the Talmud with soph pasuq to mark verse boundaries.

ג׳ גימ״ל

Gimmel abbreviated with geresh to represent the number 3 vs. distinguished by gershayim as a letter name.

The geresh can also signal a "foreign" or borrowed pronunciation represented by a native Aramaic letter. Especially common are the modifications ג׳, used to represent both the sound of "j" word *jam* and the sound "ch" in *chance*, and ז׳, which stands for the sound of "s" in *leisure*.

Modern Aramaic uses familiar Western punctuation marks instead of the *soph pasuq*. The period, question mark, exclamation mark and comma may all appear in a string of Aramaic text.

yalunke mād ʿamrittu la gōzi b-khabrokh![†] ילונכי מאד אמרתו לא גוזי בכברוך!

Children, whatever you tell them, do not listen to your words!

Notice that special final letter forms are written at the end of a word even when that word falls in the middle of a sentence. The final forms are *word final*, not *absolutely final*.

שקדמו לא בטיל לענין אחריות:

Excerpt from the Talmud commentary mentioned above. Notice the final form of nun within the sentence.

Also notice that Aramaic may be written with or without the diacritics. Consonant and vowel diacritics occur frequently in learning resources and important texts. Outside of these contexts, Modern Aramaic is very rarely written with vowel and consonant diacritics. The following example of Jewish Neo-Aramaic with diacritics is therefore atypical.

yalunke mād ʿamrittu la gōzi b-khabrokh! יַלוּנְכִי מָאד אַמְרִתּוּ לַא גוֹזִי בְּכַבְרוֹךְ!

[†] Yona Sabar gives this phrase (in transliteration only) as a typical example of Modern Aramaic syntax in *A Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dictionary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 54. The transliteration has been modified and the square script supplied by the author.

The Estrangela Cursive Script

ܐ

ܐܠܦ

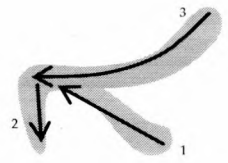
'alap

transliteration

ʾ

pronunciation

/ʔ/



← *copy direction*

ـبـ

بيت

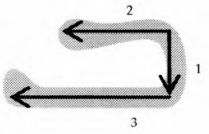
bet

transliteration

b

pronunciation

/b/



ג

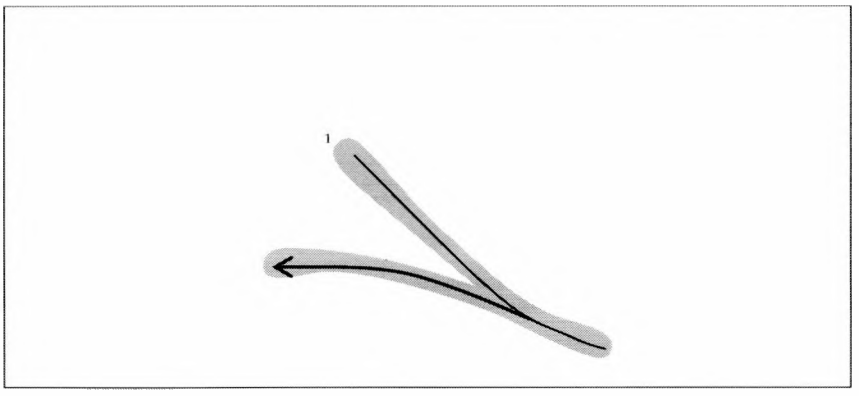
gammal

transliteration

g

pronunciation

/g/



ܕ

ܕܠܬ

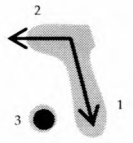
dalat

transliteration

d

pronunciation

/d/



							ܕ

ה

ה

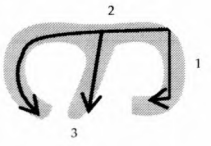
he

transliteration

h

pronunciation

/h/



ⴰ

ⴰⵡⴰ

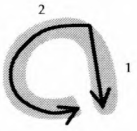
waw

transliteration

w

pronunciation

/w/



ز

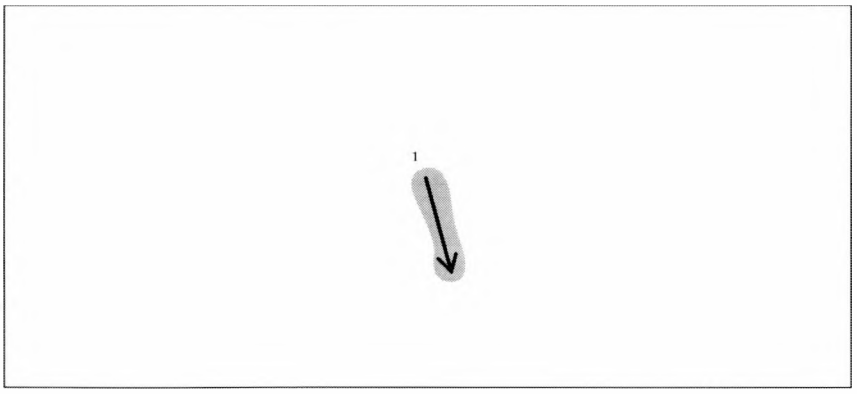
zayin

transliteration

z

pronunciation

/z/



ܚ

ḥeṯ

ḥet

transliteration

ḥ or kh

pronunciation

/ħ/ ~ /x/

							ܚ

ט

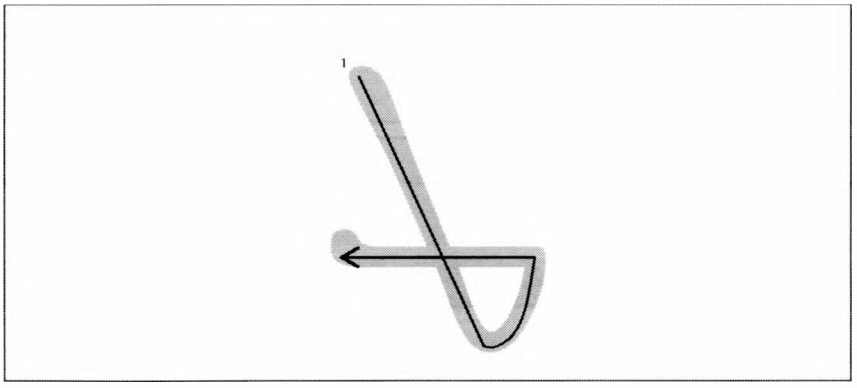
tet

transliteration

ṭ

pronunciation

/tˢ/



ܝ

ܝܘܕ

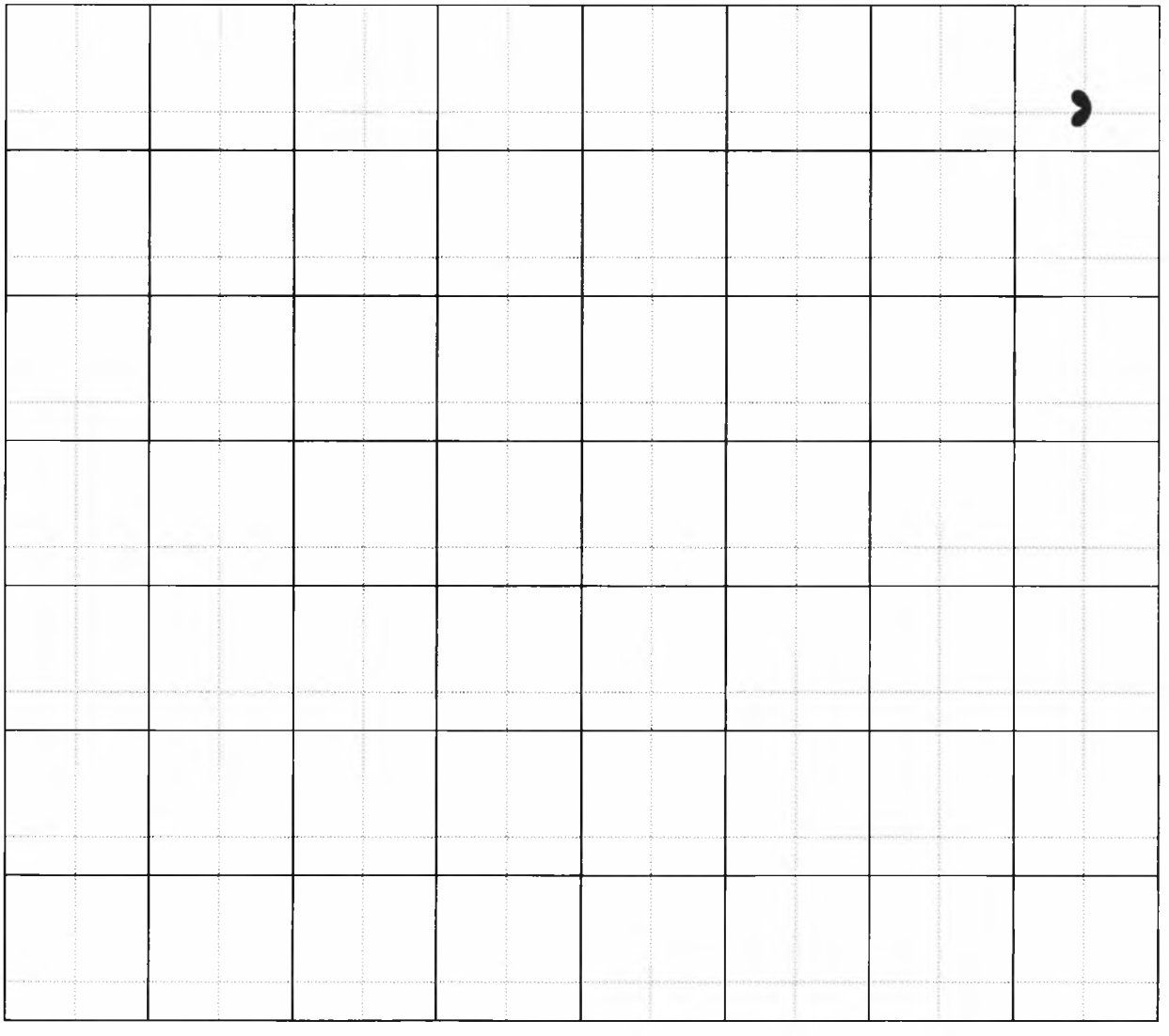
yud

transliteration

y

pronunciation

/j/



ܟ

ܟܦ

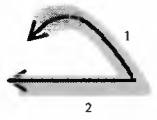
kap

transliteration

k

pronunciation

/k/



							ܟ

ل

لحد

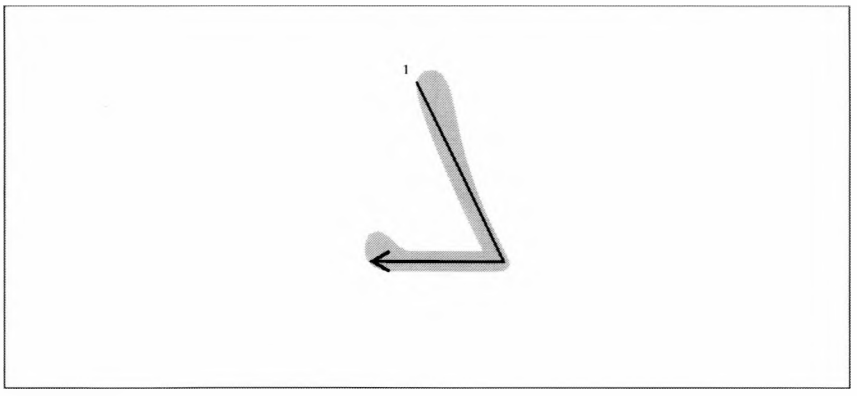
lammad

transliteration

l

pronunciation

/l/



מ

מִם

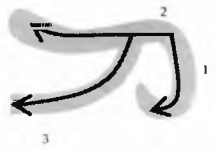
mim

transliteration

m

pronunciation

/m/



ن

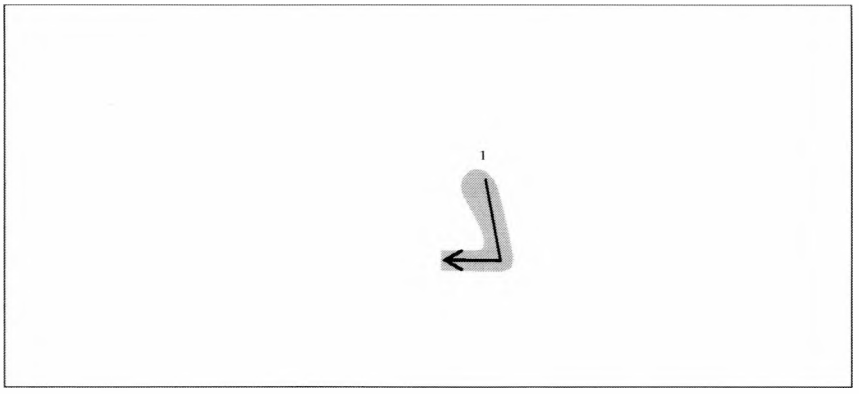
nun

transliteration

n

pronunciation

/n/



ס

ܣܡܟܬ

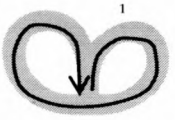
simkat

transliteration

s

pronunciation

/s/



ع

ʿayin

transliteration

ʿ

pronunciation

/ʕ/

ف

ڤ

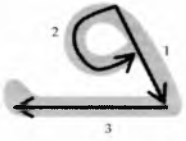
pe

transliteration

p

pronunciation

/p/



ص ـص

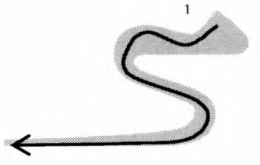
ṣade

transliteration

ṣ or s

pronunciation

/sˤ/ ~ /s/



ס

𐡒𐡅𐡐

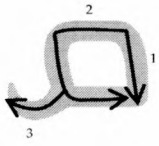
qop

transliteration

q or ḳ

pronunciation

/q/



ر

ـر

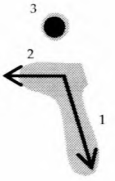
resh

transliteration

r

pronunciation

/r/



ש

שׁ

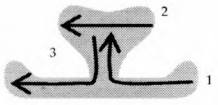
shin

transliteration

sh or š

pronunciation

/ʃ/



ⵜ

ⴰⵜ

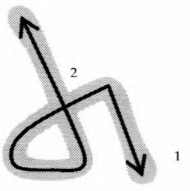
taw

transliteration

t

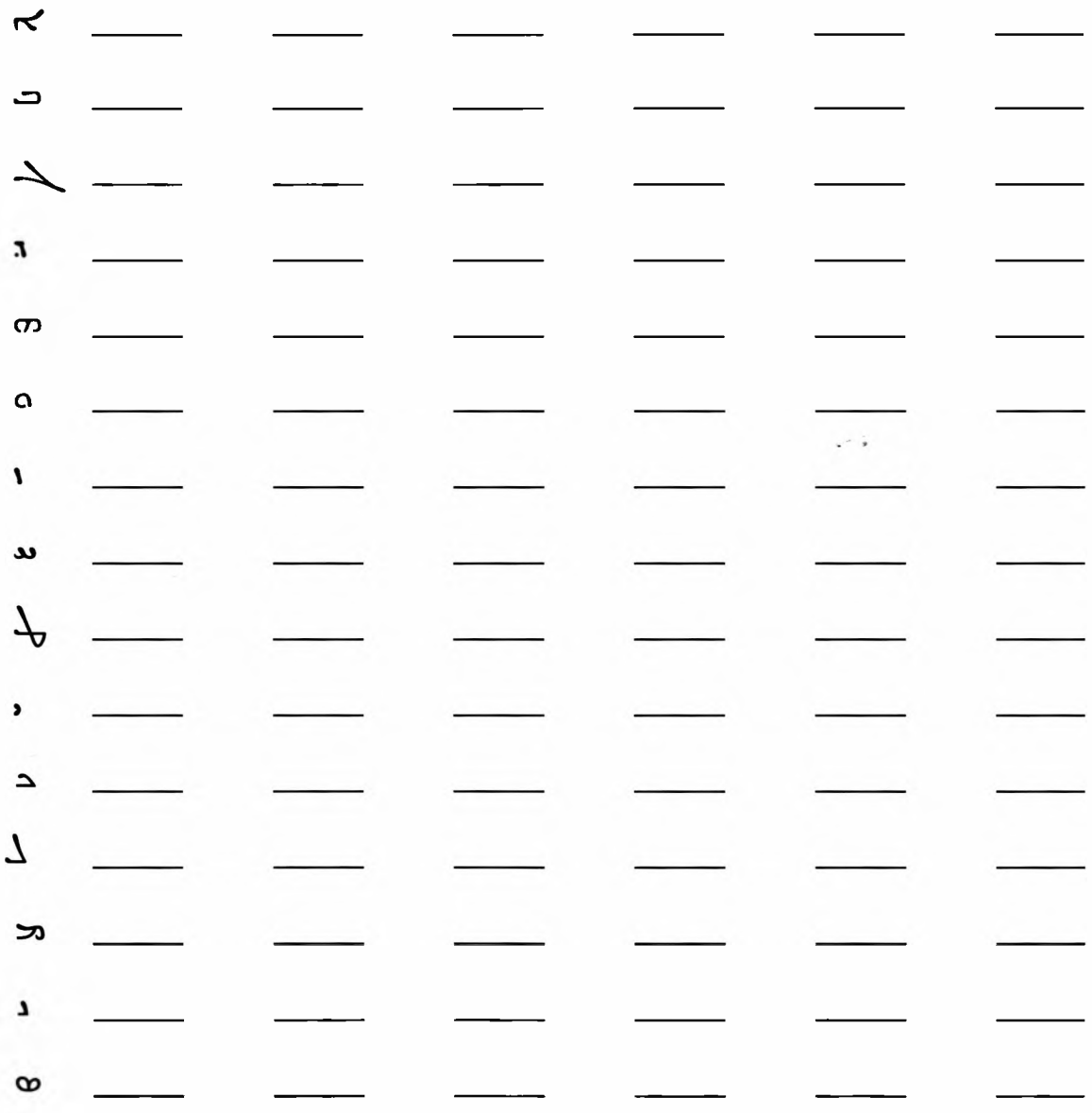
pronunciation

/t/



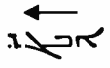
The Assyrian *abgad* or alphabet is both a valuable learning tool and a significant cultural artifact. Syriac speakers have used the Estrangela script to write Assyrian Aramaic for more than two millennia. Estrangela is also the source of the modern Eastern and Western Assyrian scripts, and is still used alongside both.

The letters of the alphabet represent consonants, while vowels are traditionally inferred. Copy the entire alphabet six times to learn the traditional order of the 22 Aramaic letters. Pay attention to pen strokes and the composition of each character as you practice.



Direction of Writing

Aramaic letters are written and read from right to left.

'abgad	(d-g-b-')	*alphabet*	
			_____
bar	(r-b)	*son*	
			_____

Notice that transliterations written in the Roman alphabet are still read from left to right.

'abgad _____

Syllables

Aramaic scripts revolve around consonants. The basic syllable in Aramaic contains one consonant plus one vowel, or CV. Words often end in consonants, having a final syllable of the type CVC. In its basic form, the cursive script indicates only consonants. In other words, you must infer vowels because *th scrpt s wrttn ths wy.*

'abgad _____

Aramaic distinguishes between the vowels *a, e, i, o* and *u*.

raq		sleq	
stubborn	_____	*to leave*	_____
di			
my	_____		
ho		kul	
wait!	_____	*all*	_____

Aramaic has both long and short vowels. Short vowels like *a* differ from long vowels like *ā*.

raq *stubborn*

_____

ṣāg *healthy*

_____

Two consonants may occur side by side, as in a syllable of the type CCV. In these cases, we infer no vowel whatsoever between the multiple consonants.

'abgad _____

Exercise 4

Practice reading and writing Aramaic words in the Estrangela script. Each word on the left transliterates one cursive script word on the right. Match each cursive script word with its corresponding transliteration. Once you have finished matching, take the time to rewrite each word on the blank lines provided.

1. bas *seeing as* _____
2. 'ādāb *gentle* _____
3. ser *mystery* _____
4. ktab *to write* _____
5. shal *shawl* _____
6. 'āmret *you think so* _____
7. 'al *(up)on* _____
8. tba' *to follow* _____
9. sleq *to leave* _____
10. lbesh *to put on (clothes)* _____

Ligatures

In the Estrangela cursive script, most letters not only sit side by side but also connect to each other. These connections between letters are known as *ligatures*. Ligatures are a regular part of Estrangela and follow strict rules – each letter either connects or does not connect with the following letter.

A letter may connect to other letters within the same word. Consider the shape of the letter ܠ *lammadh* at the beginning versus in the middle of a word.

lap	ܠܦ	s**l**eq	ܣܠܩ
totally	_____	*to leave*	_____

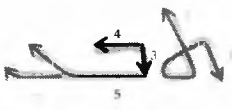
More than half of the Estrangela letters connect on their right *and* left sides. These letters end in a final stroke along the writing line, much like cursive forms of the Roman alphabet.

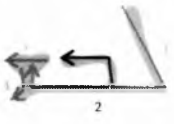
ʿā**sh**eq	ܥܫܩ	l**b**esh	ܠܒܫ
in love	_____	*to put on*	_____

Less than half of the Estrangela letters connect on their right side *only*. These letters tend to end in a curve or vertical stroke on their left side, like ܘ *waw*, or simply do not end on the writing line, like ܪ *resh*. A small gap falls between the left side of such letters and the following letter. For example, ܐ *alap*, ܕ *dalat* and ܬ *taw* do not connect to a following letter.

ʿā**d**āb	ܥܕܐܒ	k**t**ab	ܟܬܒ
gentle	_____	*to write*	_____

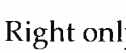
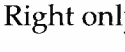
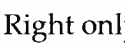
Letters that begin with a downstroke *towards* the writing line are written with an upstroke *away from* the writing line when they connect to a previous letter.

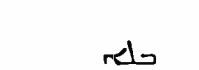
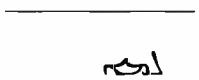
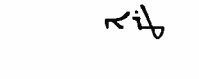




t**b**aʿ	_____	*to follow*	
l**b**esh	_____	*to put on*	

Practice linking letters by copying the list of words below. Every letter of the alphabet appears between letters that would connect if possible. This list accounts for all basic ligatures.

Letter	Example	Notes on ligatures
ܐ		Right only. Slight backturn from writing line on first stroke: .
ܒ		Right & left. First stroke becomes an upward stroke.
ܓ		Right & left. Made with one continuous stroke.
ܕ		Right only. First stroke becomes an upward stroke.
ܗ		Right only. First stroke becomes an upward stroke.
ܘ		Right only. Initial upward stroke, then counterclockwise circle.
ܙ		Right only. Ends in downward stroke: .
ܚ		Right & left. Made with one continuous stroke.
ܛ		Right & left. Lift pen for downward stroke: .
ܝ		Right & left with a continuous stroke. Shorter than other letters.
ܟ		Right & left. Top curve first, then bottom line.

ܠ		Right & left. A continuous stroke *or* lift pen for downward stroke.
ܡ		Right & left. Initial stroke becomes upward: ↖, then curved tail.
ܕ		Right & left in a single stroke. Do not confuse with *yud* or *'ayin*.
ܢ		Right & left. Line from previous letter to middle, then as usual.
ܣ		Right & left. Diagonal stroke first, then bottom line.
ܦ		Right & left. Initial upward stroke, semicircle, then bottom line.
ܨ		Right only. One continuous stroke.
ܩ		Right & left. Initial upward stroke, round box, then connecting tail.
ܪ		Right only. Initial stroke turns upward, then top bar, then dot.
ܫ		Right & left. Initial upward stroke, top line, then connecting tail.
ܬ		Right only. Initial stroke becomes an upward stroke.

Regular Final Letter Forms

Final forms of Aramaic letters are found at the end of a word. Different letters have different final forms.

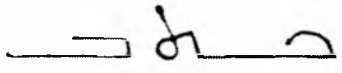
Final letters that end on the writing line have a short tail. Compare the way ܠ *lammadh* looks at the middle of a word versus the end of a word, where it takes a slight upturn.

sleq	ܫܠܩ	kul	ܟܠ
to leave	_____	*all*	_____

In their final form, the letters ܝ *yud*, ܩ *qop* and ܫ *shin* have small tails that slightly dip below the writing line.

rish	ܪܫ	nāy	ܢܝ
head	_____	*flute*	_____
sleq	ܫܠܩ		
to leave	_____		

Some calligraphers extend final lines or ligature lines. This represents an aesthetic technique.

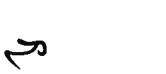
ktab	
to write	_____

Letters that never connect on their left side do not have separate final forms. These letters always retain their basic shape.

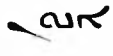
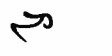
bārat	ܒܪܬ	rish	ܪܫ
a check	_____	*head*	_____

Unique Final Letter Forms

Three cursive script letters have unique final forms that do not match the practices mentioned above. Compare the forms of the letters ܟ *kap*, ܡ *mim*, ܢ *nun* and ܣ *semkat* below.

ך *kap*	kul		tak	
	all	_____	*alone*	_____
ם *mim*	mū		ham	
	what?	_____	*likewise*	_____
ן *nun*	nāy		men	
	flute	_____	*from*	_____
ף *semkat*	kasad		bas	
	deficit	_____	*since*	_____

The final forms can all connect to a previous letter. All of them retain the same shape in ligatures apart from final ן *nun*. Final ן has a longer, more horizontal tail when it cannot connect to the previous letter.

'enun		men	
they	_____	*from*	_____

Use the following practice pages to familiarize yourself with the unique final forms of these letters.

ـك

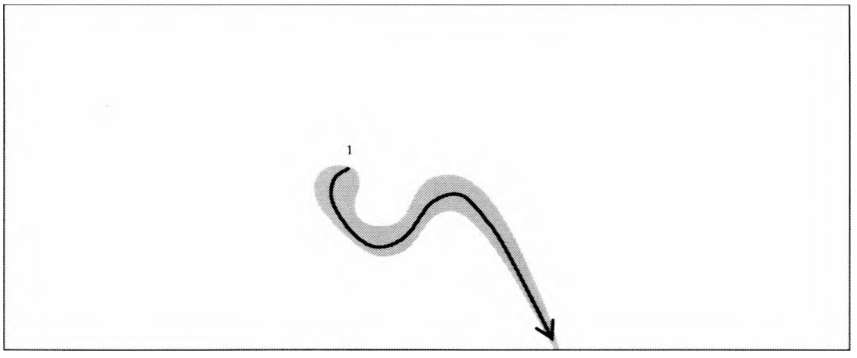
final kap

transliteration

k

pronunciation

/k/



ם

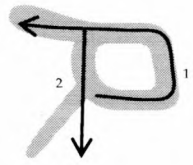
final mim

transliteration

m

pronunciation

/m/



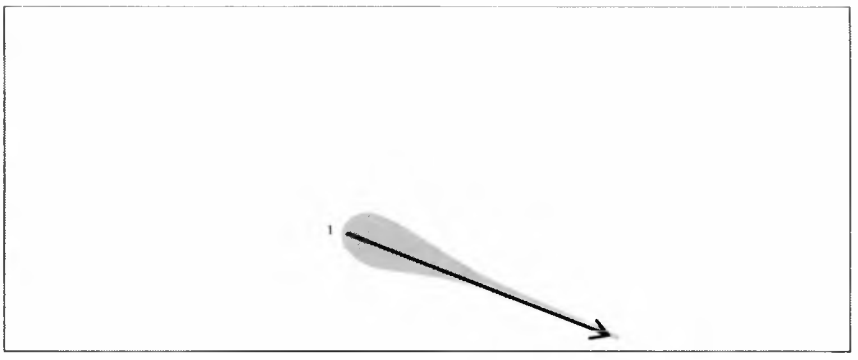
final nun

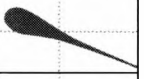
transliteration

n

pronunciation

/n/





ס

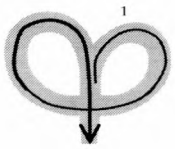
final simkat

transliteration

s

pronunciation

/s/



Vowels Represented by Letters

There are two ways to represent vowels in the cursive script. The first way involves spelling vowels with the letters ܐ *ʾalap,* ܘ *waw* and ܝ *yud*. These helpful dual-use letters are called *matres lectionis*, Latin for *mothers of reading*, when they stand for vowels.

ܐ	mainly *ā*	dāyim	ܕܵܝܺܡ
		constantly	_____
ܝ	*i* or *ē*	rish	ܪܺܝ
		head	_____
		bēt	ܒܹܝܬ
		house of...	_____
ܘ	*o* or *u*	qop	ܩܘܦ
		qop (letter)	_____
		kul	ܟܘܠ
		all	_____

At the end of a word, the matres ܐ *ʾalap,* ܘ *waw* and ܝ *yud* mainly represent a final vowel.

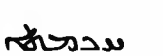
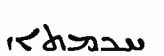
final ܐ *ʾalaph*	(*ā, e* or *ē*)	kalbā	ܟܲܠܒܵܐ
		dog	_____
		shaqluqē	ܫܩܠܘܩܹܐ
		to be hurt	_____
final ܝ *yudh*	(*i*)	di	ܕܝ
		my	_____
final ܘ *waw*	(*o* or *u*)	ho	ܗܘ
		wait!	_____

			mu		
			what?	_____	

It is rare to find instances of *o* and *u* not represented by the mater ܘ *waw*.

kul		*or*	**kul**		
all	_____		*all*	_____	

Final ܬ *taw* + ܐ *'alaph* and ܠ *lammadh* + ܐ *'alaph* may combine to form unique ligatures.

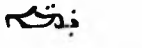
ḥēkem**tā**		*or*	ḥēkem**tā**		
wisdom	_____		*wisdom*	_____	
lā		*or*	**lā**		
no	_____		*no*	_____	

Similarly, letters with a left loop like ܗ *he* may combine to form a unique ligature with final ܝ *yud*.

tāy		*or*	**tāy**		
an equal	_____		*an equal*	_____	

Vowels Represented by Special Marks

The second way to represent vowels is optional but extremely helpful for learners. A system of dots above and below individual letters allows you to read or write a specific vowel in the script. This supplemental system is known as *vowel pointing*. The basics of this system are presented below. (The capital letter C represents any consonant.)

Ca (dot below and dot above)	**bar**	
	son	_____
Cā (two dots above)	**yamā**	
	ocean	_____

Ce (two dots horizontally below)	sleq	ܣܠܶܩ
	to leave	_____
Cē (two dots diagonally below)	bēt	ܒܹܝܬ
	ought	_____
Ci (one dot below)	rish	ܪܺܝܫ
	head	_____
Co (*waw* with dot above)	ho	ܗܘ̇
	wait!	_____
Cu (*waw* with dot below)	suret	ܣܘ̣ܪܝܬ
	Syriac	_____

Consonants followed by no vowel whatsoever are written without vowel pointing. This applies to consonants immediately followed by another consonant and consonants at the end of a word.

C (no vowel diacritics)	malkā	ܡܰܠܟܳܐ
	king	_____
	ktab	ܟܬ̰ܰܒ
	to write	_____

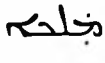
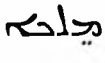
Notice that vowel marks occur *along with* the matres letters. The matres lectionis are part of the basic spelling of words, then vowel diacritics are added as a secondary layer to the spelling.

di	ܕܺܝ	ho	ܗܘ̇
my	_____	*wait!*	_____

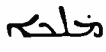
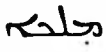
Also note that ܕ *dalat* and ܪ *resh* are written with a final dot, which they retain when vowel pointing is added. It is essential to read the dot as part of the consonant and not a vowel mark.

dawe		**r**ab	
butter	_____	*mister*	_____

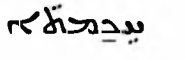
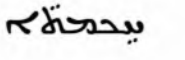
In common writings, vowel pointing is used mainly to clarify the reading of a letter. Consistent, widespread vowel pointing is restricted to important texts and reference materials.

malkā		**me**lkā	
king	_____	*advice*	_____

Vowel points are not the only way to distinguish words. When it comes to homographs (distinct words with the same spelling), writers may instead place a point above versus below words to differentiate them.

malkā		**melkā**	
king	_____	*advice*	_____
sānā		**snā**	
to stand	_____	*to hate*	_____

A small horizontal line may be placed below a consonant when multiple consonants are clustered together. This line indicates that the consonant is pronounced with a short vowel.

ḥ**ē**k**e**mtā		ḥ**ē**k**m**tā	
wisdom	_____	*wisdom*	_____

Use the following pages to practice writing vowel pointing on the Aramaic consonants ܠ *lammad* and ܗ *he* as well as the unique ligatures introduced above. Consider that the diacritics comprise the last stroke(s) of a character.

ܐ

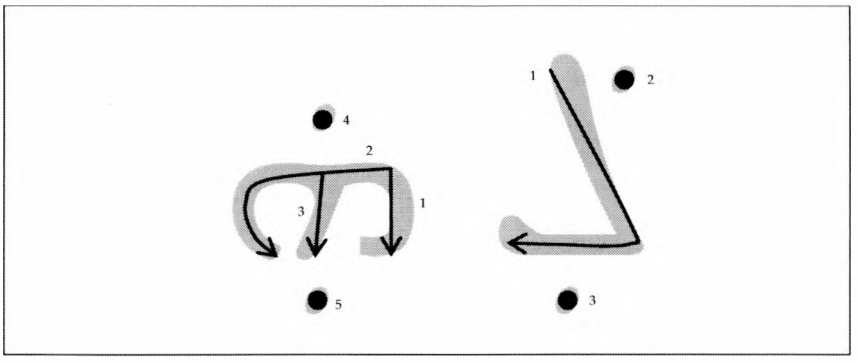
pthaḥa

transliteration

a

pronunciation

/a/



ܐ

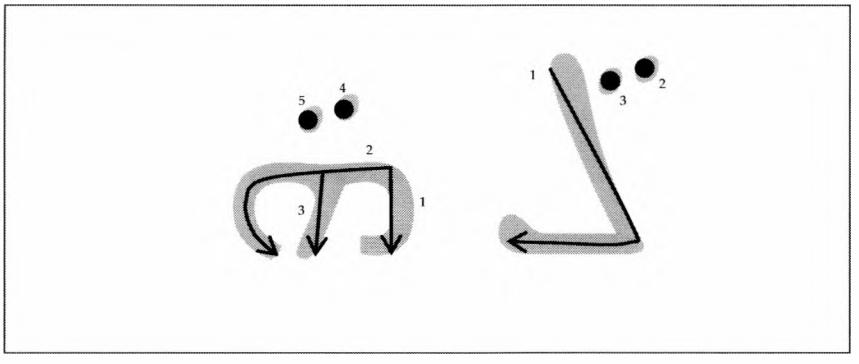
zqaph

transliteration

ā

pronunciation

/a:/



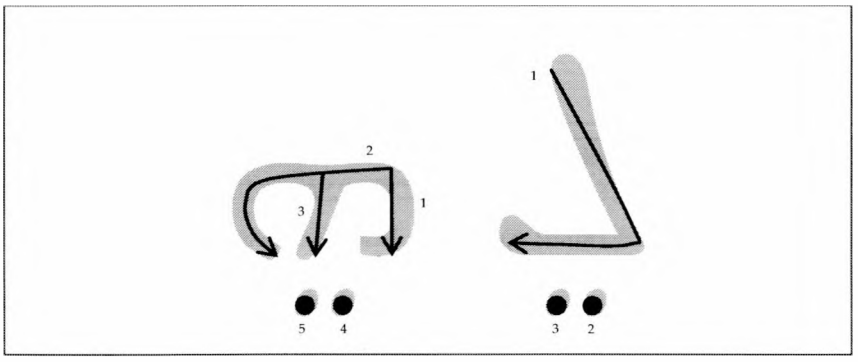
zlama pshiqa

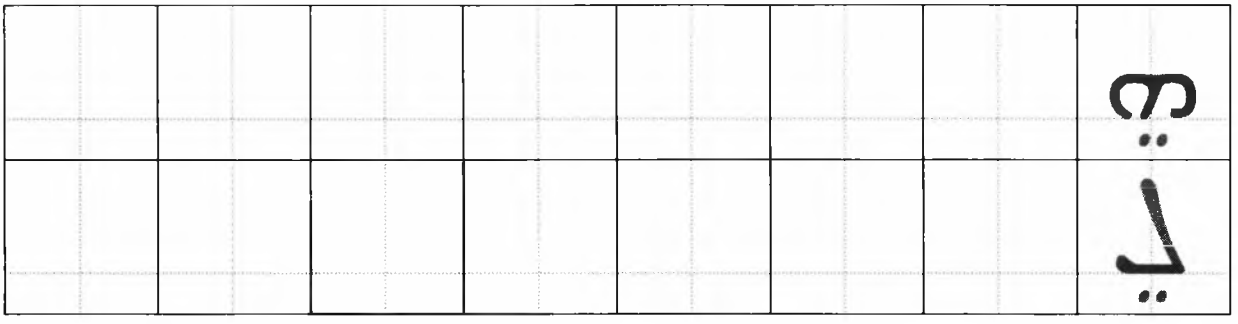
transliteration

e

pronunciation

/e/





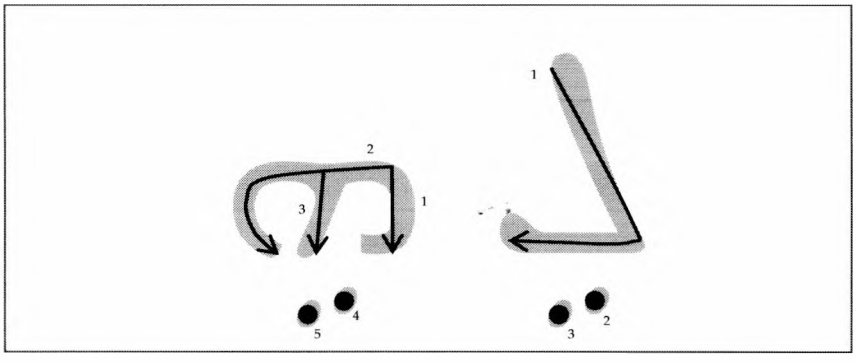
zlama qashya

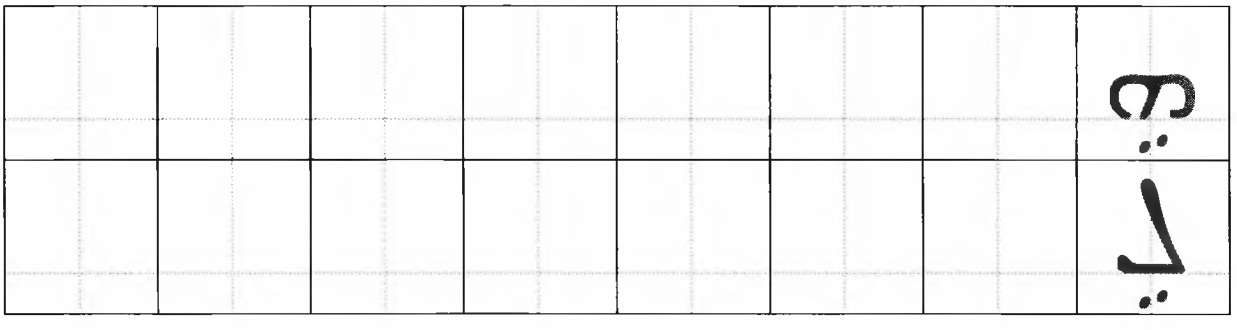
transliteration

ē

pronunciation

/e:/





ḥ

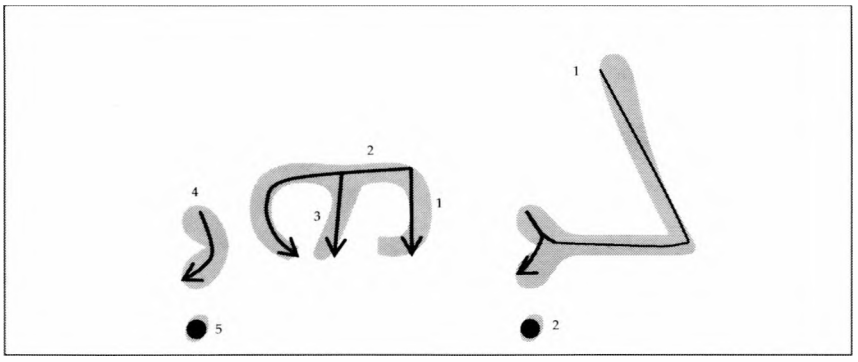
ḥvaṣa

transliteration

ī or i

pronunciation

/i:/ ~ /i/



ọ

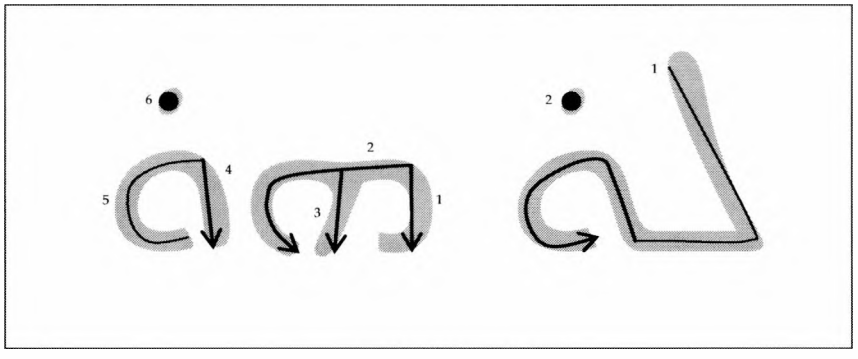
rwaḥa

transliteration

ō or o

pronunciation

/o:/ ~ /o/



ṣ

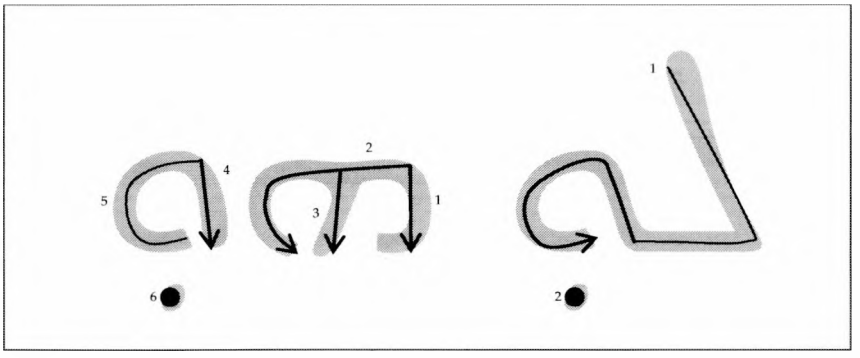
ʾṣaṣa

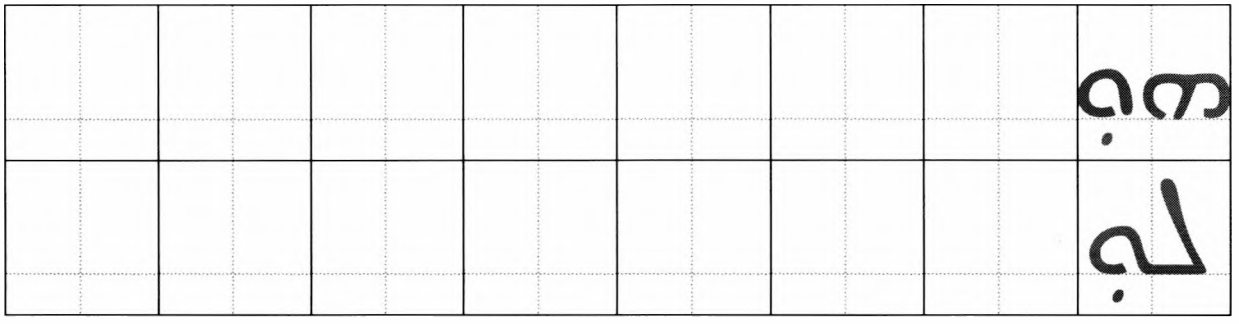
transliteration

ū or u

pronunciation

/u:/ ~ /u/





ṩ

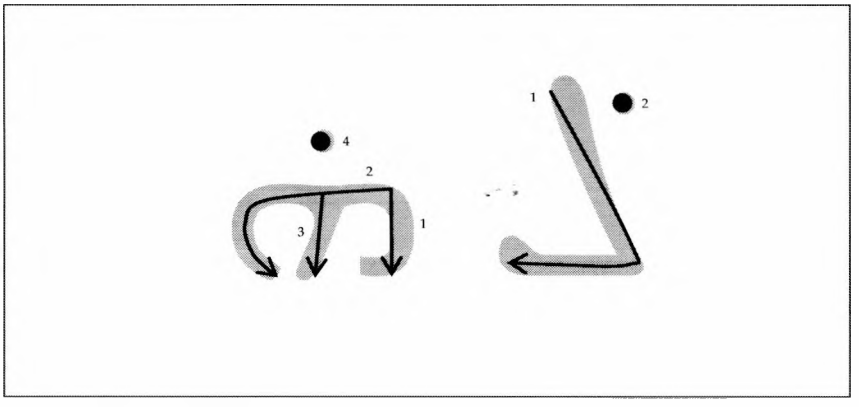
single point above

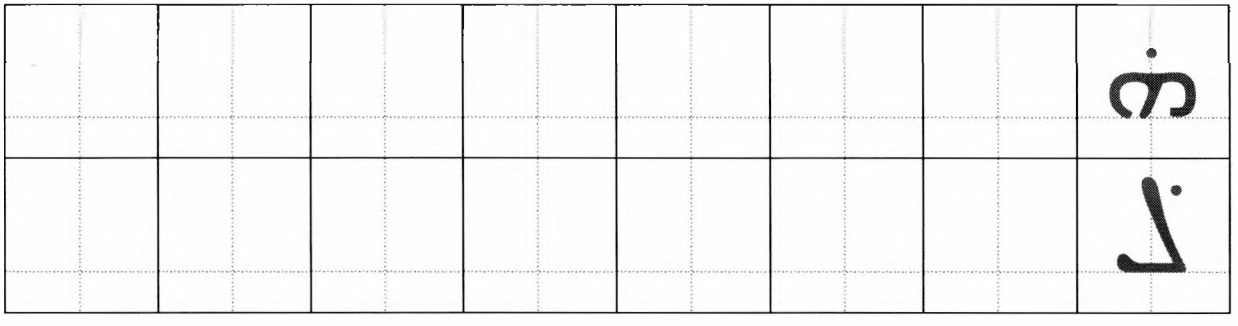
transliteration

(none)

pronunciation

(distinguishes words with the same spelling)





◌̣

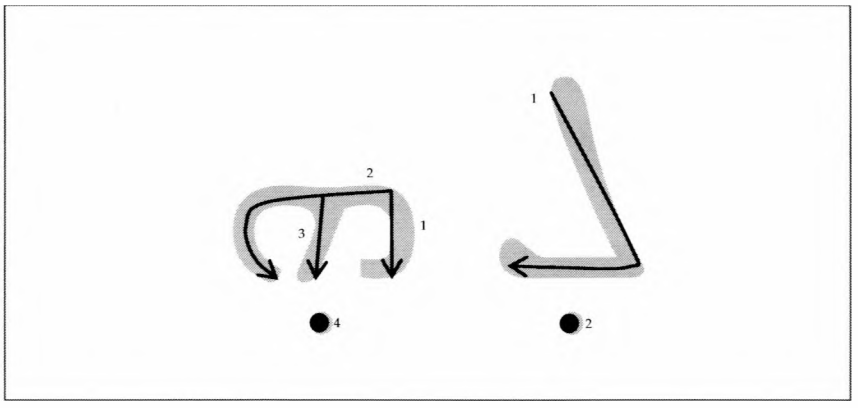
single point below

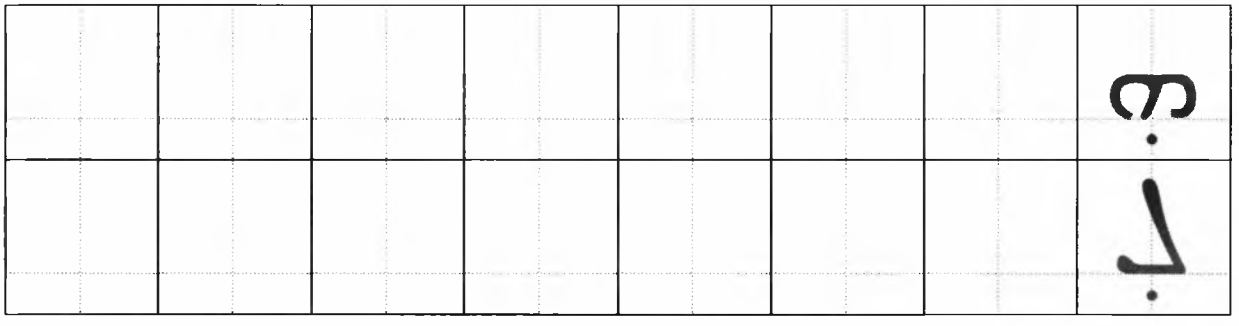
transliteration

(none)

pronunciation

(distinguishes words with the same spelling)





–

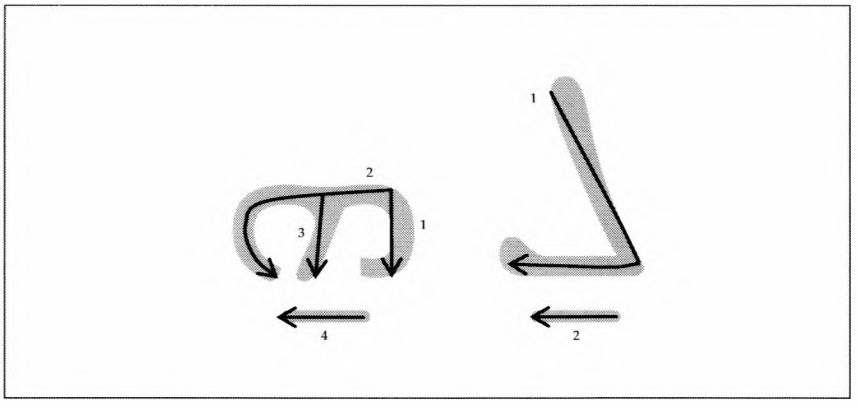
mhagyana

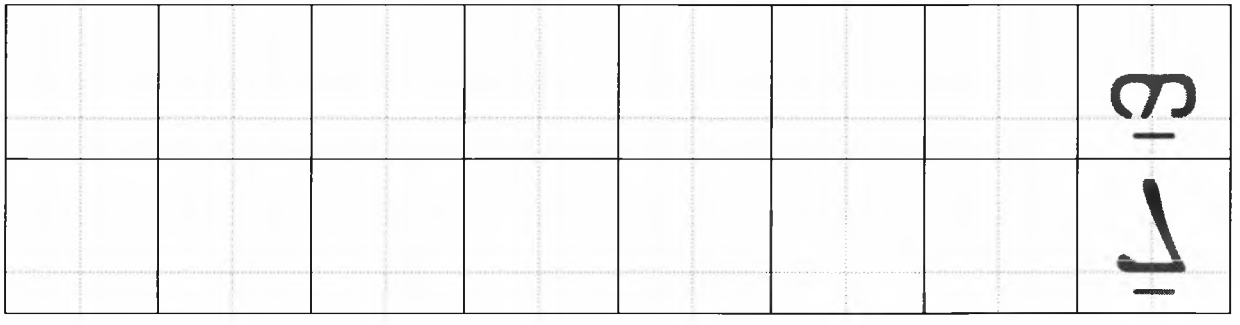
transliteration

(none)

pronunciation

(indicates vowel inserted after consonant)





ܬ ܬ

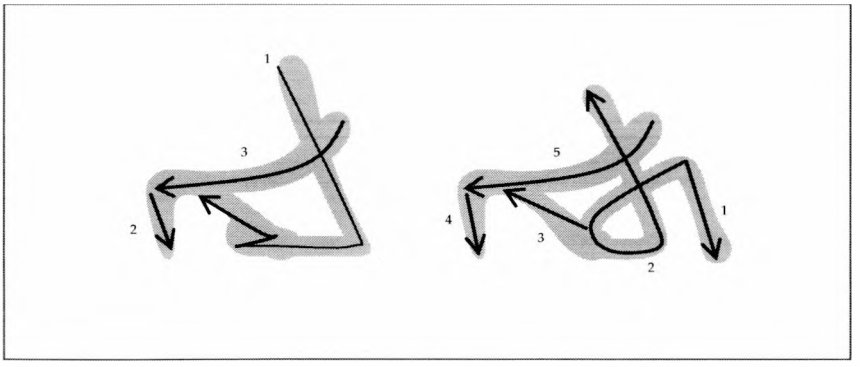
final ligatures with 'alap

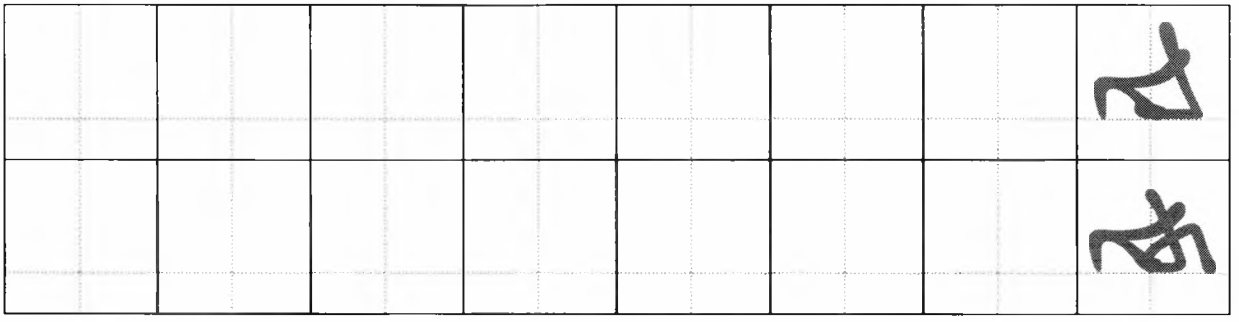
transliteration

ta, etc.

pronunciation

/ta/, etc.





ܝ

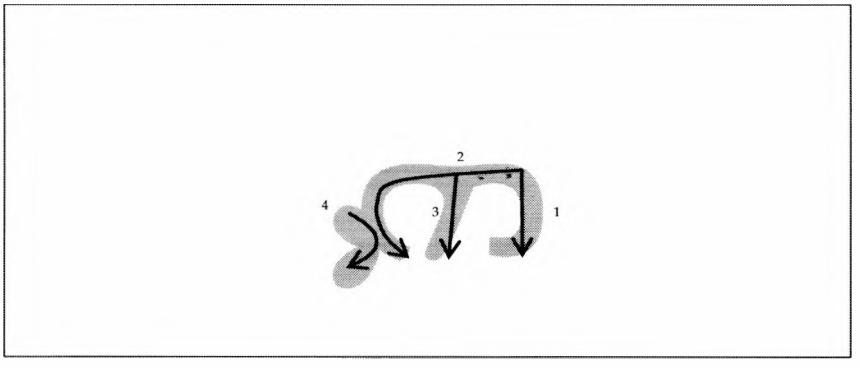
final ligatures with yud

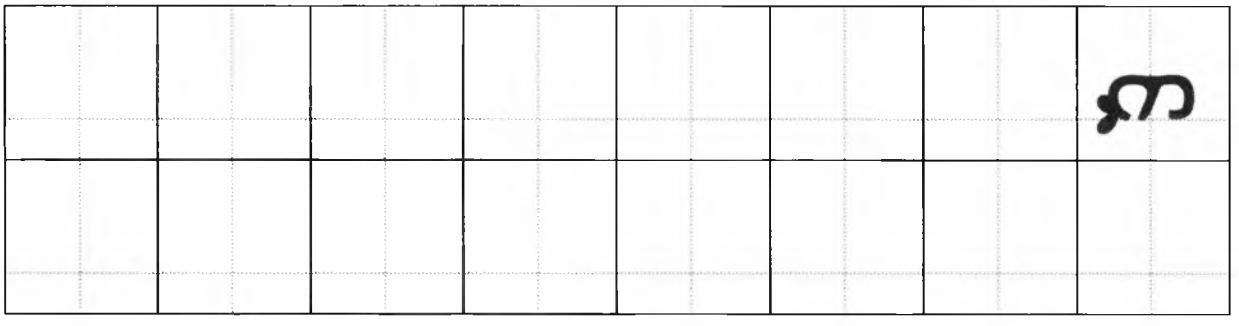
transliteration

hi, etc.

pronunciation

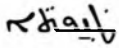
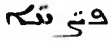
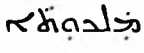
/hi/, etc.





Exercise 5

Use the words in this activity to cultivate your understanding of Aramaic vowels. In the first half of the exercise, copy and transliterate each word written in Estrangela. Pay close attention to the vowels in your transliterations.

1. *family* _____ *transliteration:*
2. *myrrh* _____ *transliteration:*
3.  *unclean* _____ *transliteration:*
4. *which ones?* _____ *transliteration:*
5.  *to be glad* _____ *transliteration:*
6.  *kingdom* _____ *transliteration:*

The second half of this exercise presents transliterated Aramaic words. Write each transliterated word twice in the cursive script. Include vowel pointing in your transliteration.

7. duktā *place* _____ _____
8. pāk *pure* _____ _____
9. bērzā *land* _____ _____
10. lā'oṭā *swearer* _____ _____
11. 'azizā *ferocious* _____ _____
12. ṣilāh *quietude* _____ _____

Modified Consonants Represented by Special Marks

Aramaic has two types of consonants: *soft* consonants and *hard* consonants. Six hard consonants are pronounced as stops, six soft consonants as fricatives. A dot *above* the letter represents the familiar hard pronunciation, while a dot *below* the letter marks soft pronunciation.

ܒ	b	ܒ̣	b̲	/w/ in ***w**ine* or /v/ in ***v**eer*
ܓ	g	ܓ̣	g̲	/ɣ/ like voiced /x/
ܕ	d	ܕ̣	d̲	/ð/ in ***th**is*
ܟ	k	ܟ̣	k̲	/x/ in ***loch*** (an *h* sound at top of throat)
ܦ	p	ܦ̣	p̲	/f/ in *fair*
ܬ	t	ܬ̣	t̲	/θ/ in ***th**ing*

Soft consonants may be transliterated with an *h* after the normal consonant letter (*th*, *ph* and so on) or a line beneath (*t̲*, *p̲*, etc.). Our examples have so far failed to distinguish between the soft and hard pronunciation of consonants. Now we can represent them in the script and in transliteration.

ktāb̲ā	ܟܬܒܐ	**bayt̲ā**	ܒܝܬܐ
book	_____	*house*	_____

Hard and soft dots may be written along with vowel points. This complicates the text, so even learning materials refrain from printing both vowel and consonant diacritics on every applicable letter.

ktāb̲ā	ܟܬܳܒܳܐ		**bayt̲ā**	ܒܰܝܬܳܐ
book	_____		*house*	_____
bak̲tā	ܒܰܟܬܳܐ	*or*	bak̲tā	ܒܰܟܬܳܐ
wife	_____		*wife*	_____

Double consonants occur in the middle of some words in Classical and Eastern Syriac, but not in Western dialects. Double consonants are pronounced long but written as a single consonant.

lebbā		ga**dd**ā	
heart	_____	*luck*	_____

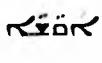
Both hard and soft consonants may be doubled.

lebbā		**'a**bbā	
heart	_____	*father*	_____

Aramaic words may contain silent consonants as a result of historical spelling. An upper bar marks an unpronounced consonant. Our transcriptions will either italicize or drop silent letters.

qāshā		**'a***n***t**	
to cool off	_____	*you*	_____

Silent consonants may instead be indicated by a downward slash above the letter.

qāshā		**'a**t	
to cool off	_____	*you*	_____

An upper bar may also be used to mark a consonant immediately followed by another consonant (rather than a vowel).

ktāb̲ā		kātāb̲ā	
book	_____	*writer*	_____

Some Syriac consonants can represent multiple phonemes. The letter ܓ *gammal* also stands for /dʒ/ as in *jam*, ܟ *kap* for /tʃ/ as in ***ch**ain* and ܦ *pe* for /f/ as in *fair*. These secondary pronunciations are signaled by an upward slash below the letter.

chāy		**'**āfārin	
tea	_____	*bravo!*	_____

Practice writing consonant diacritics in the copy section below, then complete the exercise that follows. Consider that diacritic marks comprise the last pen strokes of the letter.

ـٔـ

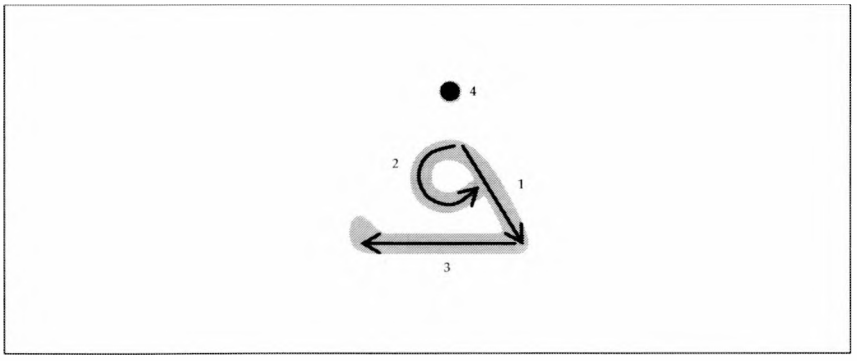
qushshaya

transliteration

b, g, d, k, p, t

pronunciation

/b/, /g/, /d/, /k/, /p/, /t/



							ف

ـٖـ

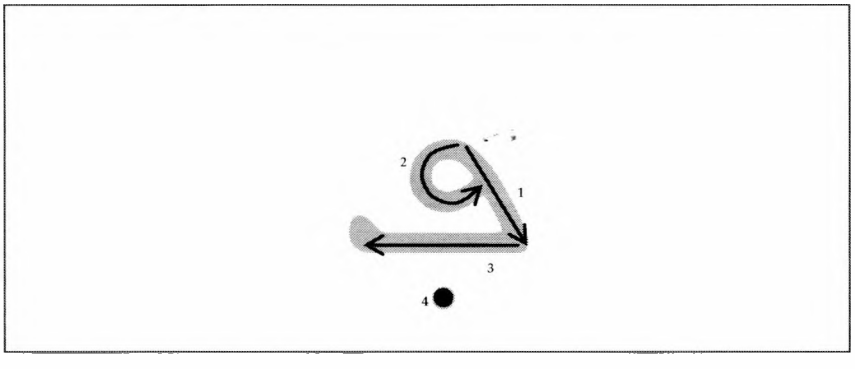
ruqqakha

transliteration

b̲ g̲ d̲ k̲ p̲ t̲

pronunciation

/v/ /ɣ/ /ð/ /x/ /f/ /θ/



							ف

ـْـ

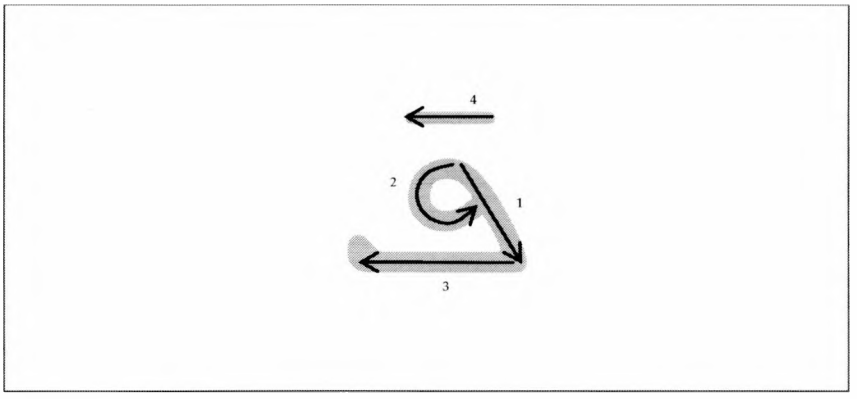
marheṭana

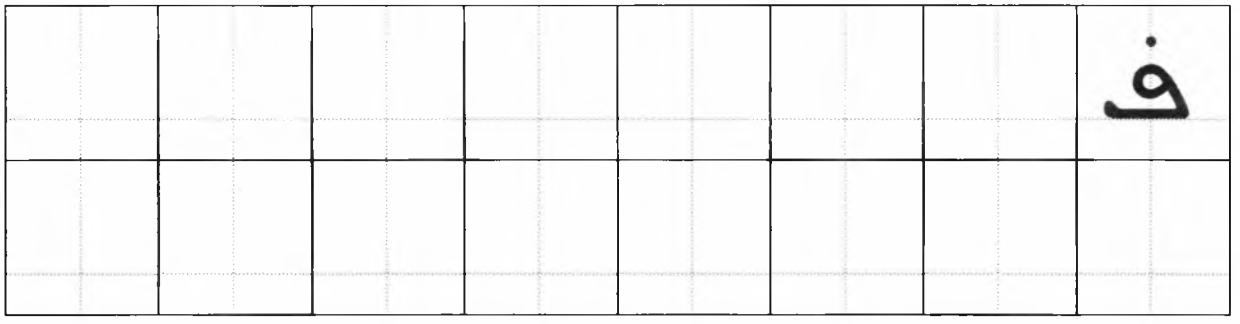
transliteration

(none)

pronunciation

(silent consonant or consonant followed by another consonant)





ـّـ

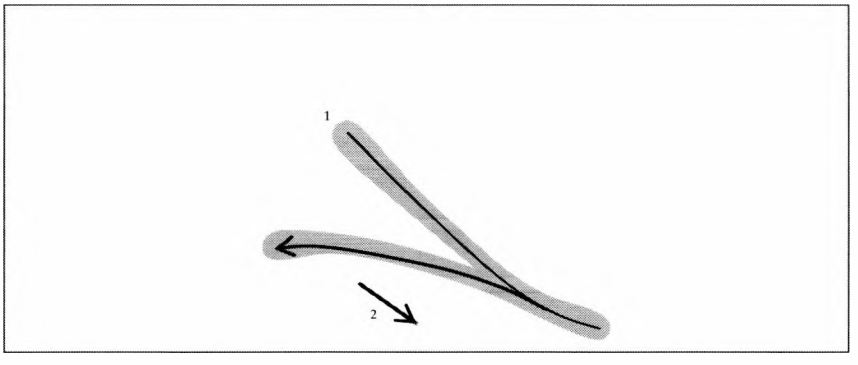
jammal

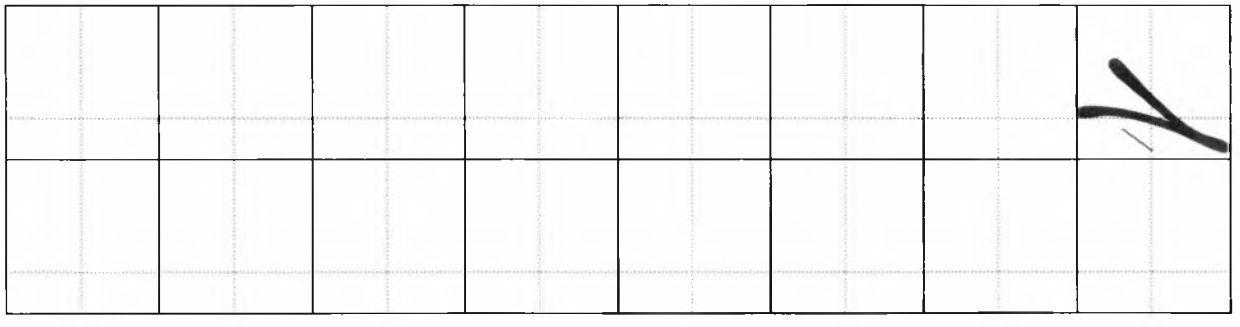
transliteration

ġ or j

pronunciation

/dʒ/





ڇ

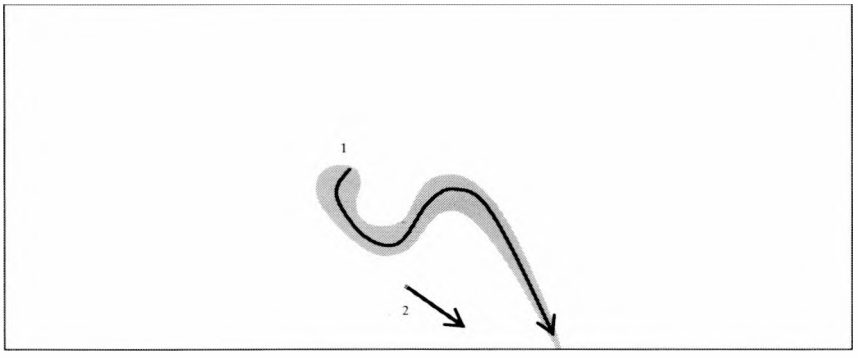
chap

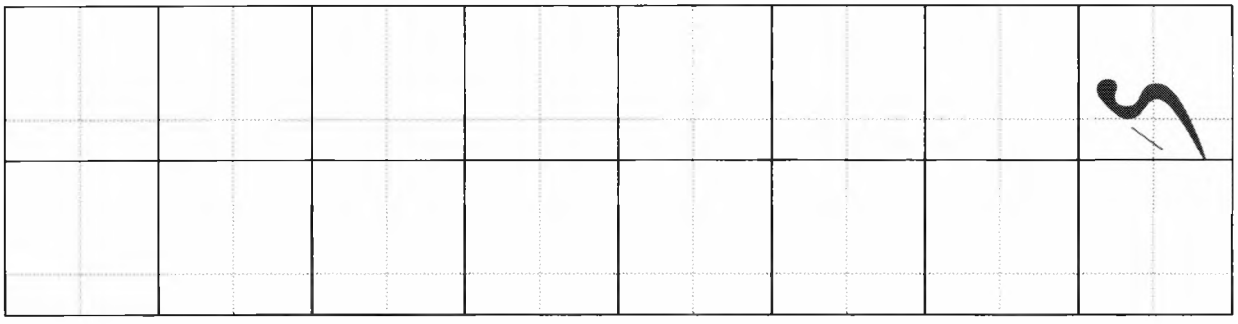
transliteration

č or ch

pronunciation

/tʃ/





ڤ

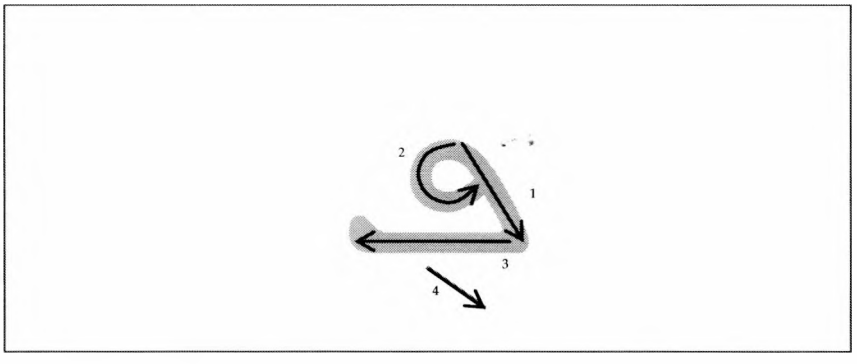
fe

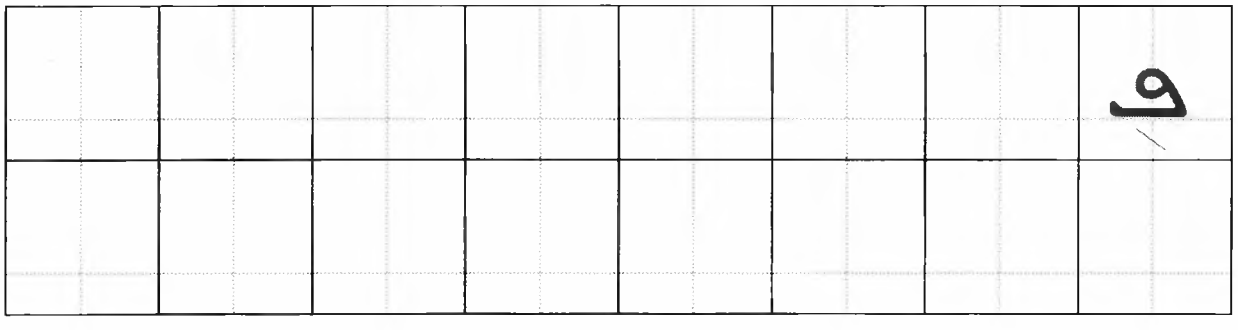
transliteration

f

pronunciation

/f/



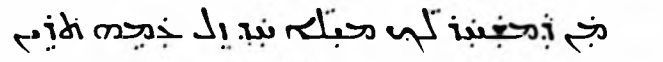


Exercise 6

The transliterations now include information about hard, soft, silent and double consonants. Rewrite every word twice in the cursive script using vowel and consonant diacritics.

1. ṣāwṯā *voice* _____ _____
2. mellāw*hy* *his words* _____ _____
3. ʾa*n*tton *all of you* _____ _____
4. jārchī *town crier* _____ _____
5. demmā *blood* _____ _____
6. malkuṯā *kingdom* _____ _____
7. hāḏē *this (feminine)* _____ _____
8. hwārā *white* _____ _____
9. gappē *threats* _____ _____
10. ṭanpāṯā *unclean ones* _____ _____

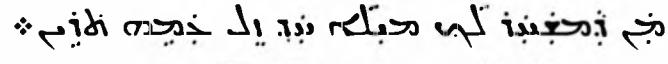
You have seen how to read and write words in the Estrangela script. You have also learned to represent specific vowels and consonants in this script. You can now begin to read phrases and sentences. Like letters, words are read from right to left. Individual words are separated from one another by a blank space, a technique used in written Aramaic since ancient times.



man damshaḥḥar lāk mīlā ḥad zel ʿammēh trēn

he that compels you to walk one mile, go with him two

Written Syriac has employed a complex system of punctuation and cantillation marks throughout its history. Traditional texts like the Peshitta may mark the end of paragraph or verse with the symbol ❖. Some manuscripts also use two vertical dots ⁝ or skewed dots ⁘ and ⁖ to represent a short break (somewhat like a comma or a period).



man damshaḥḥar lāk mīlā ḥad zel ʿammēh trēn

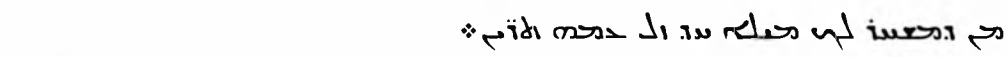
Many texts written in Estrangela place two horizontal dots over a first or middle consonant in some words. Known as *syame*, this ancient convention distinguishes the plural form of a word from the singular.

malkā		malkē	
king	_____	*kings*	_____

Modern Aramaic writers often use familiar Western punctuation marks. The period, question mark, exclamation mark and comma may all appear in a string of Aramaic text. The symbol ❖ signals the end of a paragraph.

ʾaykannā shmāk?	
What is your name? (Classical)	_____

Lines of Syriac text are *right* justified. Also, final letter forms are written at the end of a word even in the middle of a sentence. The final forms are *word final*, not *absolutely final*.



Above excerpt from Peshitta reprinted. Notice the justification, the syame on ܬܪܝܢ for "two" and final forms of nun and kap within the sentence.

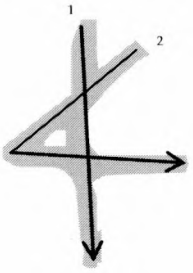
Notice that Aramaic may be written with or without diacritics (vowel pointing, syame and so on). The diacritics occur infrequently outside of learning resources and important texts.

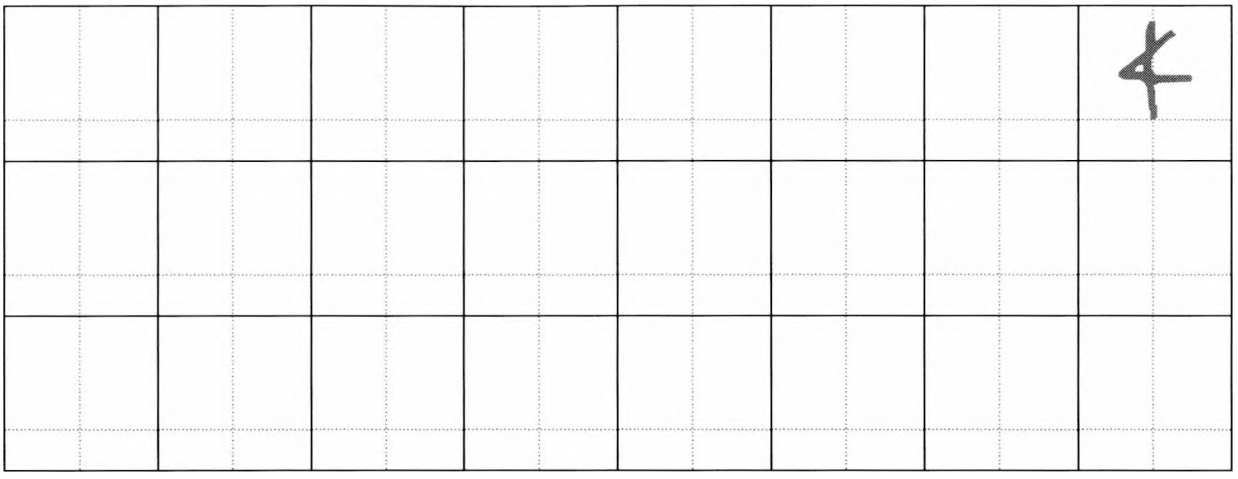
The Early Aramaic Script

letter form

equivalents

א ר

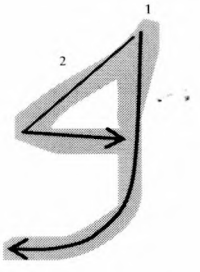


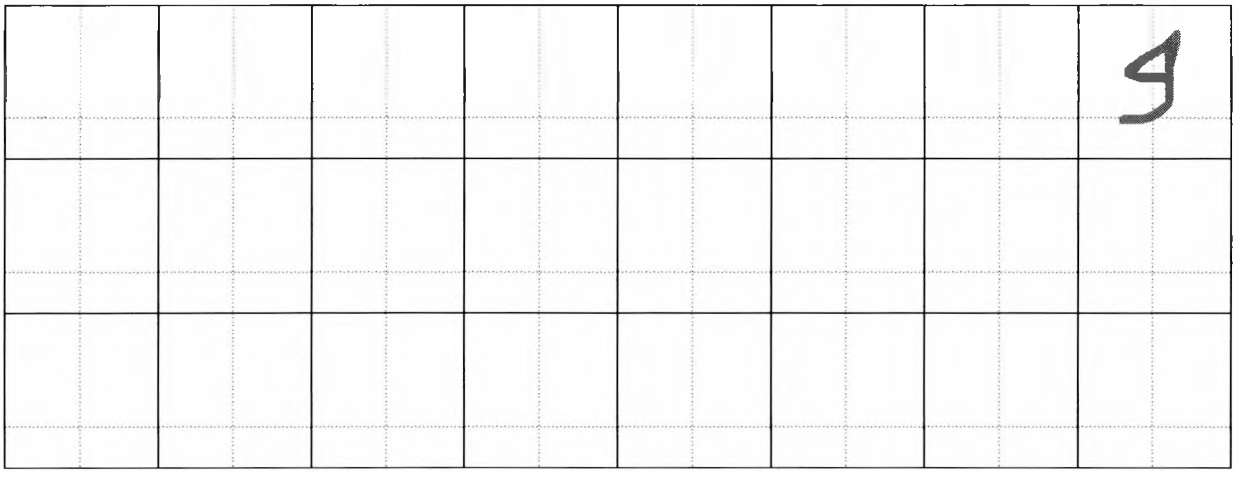


letter form

equivalents

ב ם



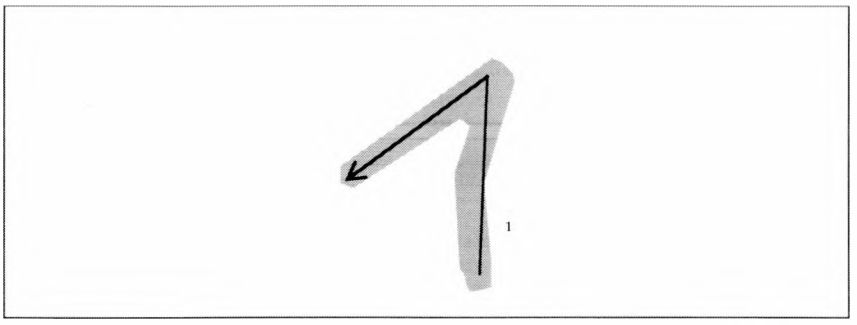


letter form

ז

equivalents

ג ץ

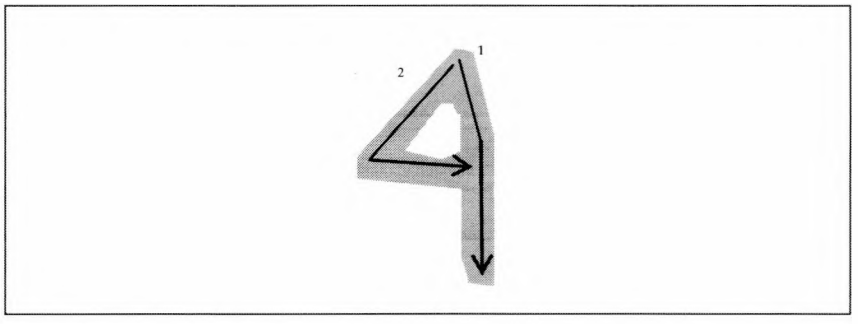


letter form

ד

equivalents

ד ג

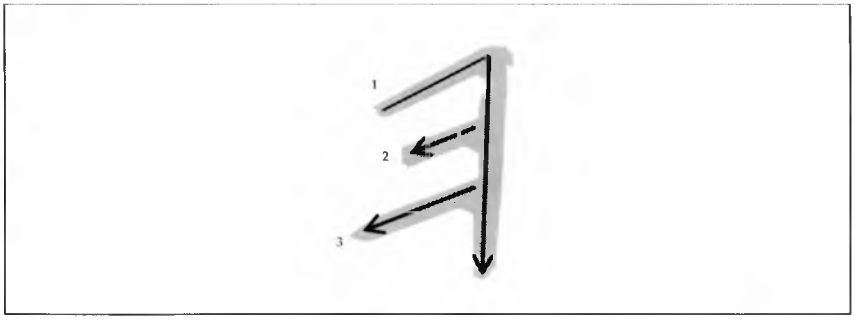


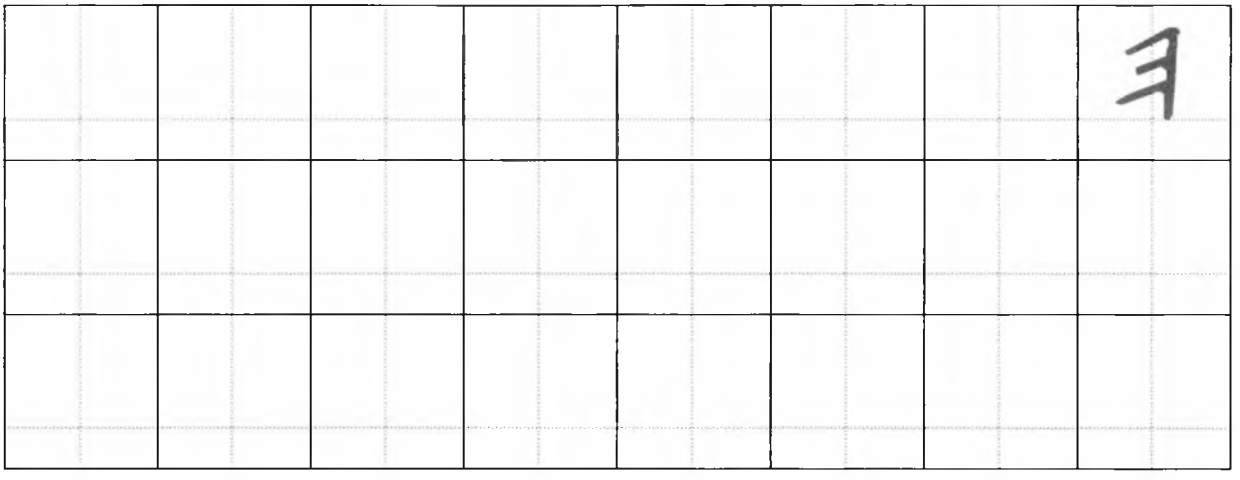
letter form

𐡄

equivalents

ה ם



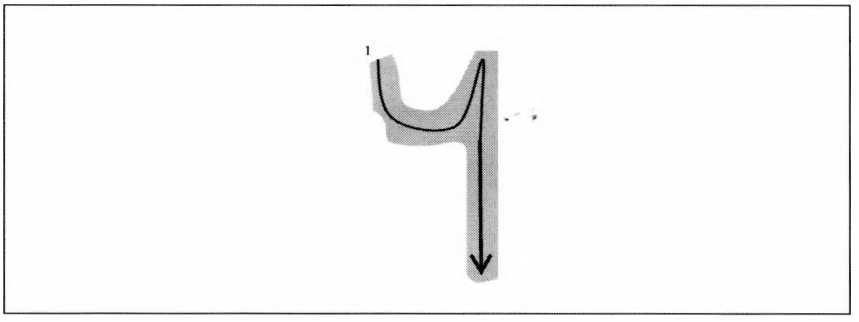


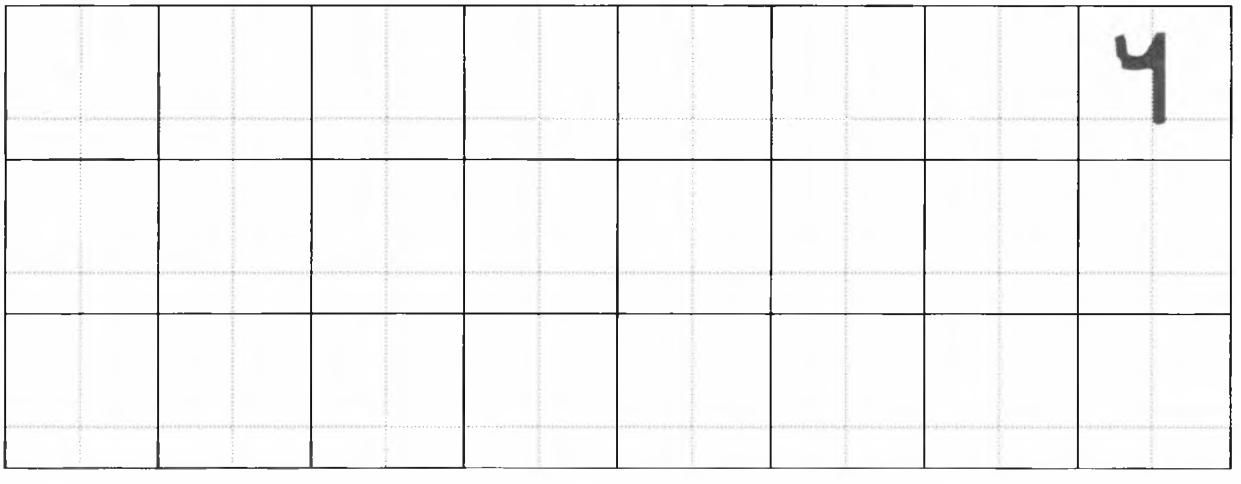
letter form

𐡃

equivalents

ו ס



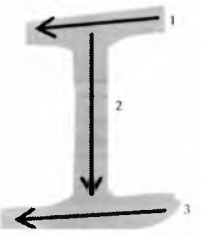


letter form

I

equivalents

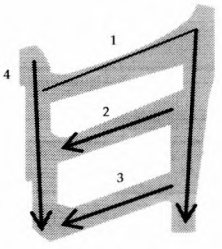
𐤉 ι



letter form

equivalents

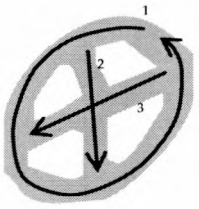
𐤃 δ



letter form

equivalents

ט ט

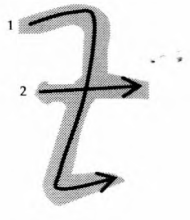


letter form

ז

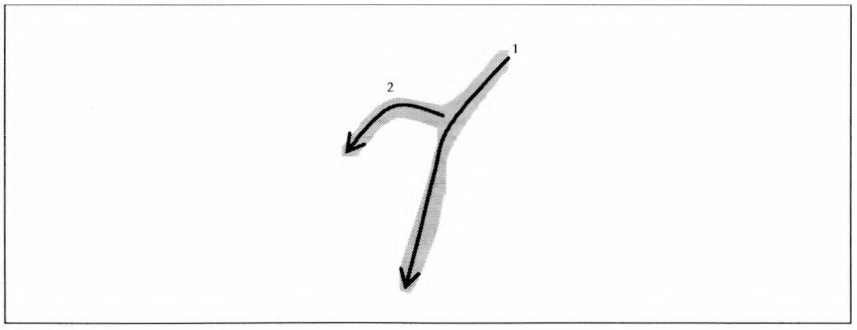
equivalents

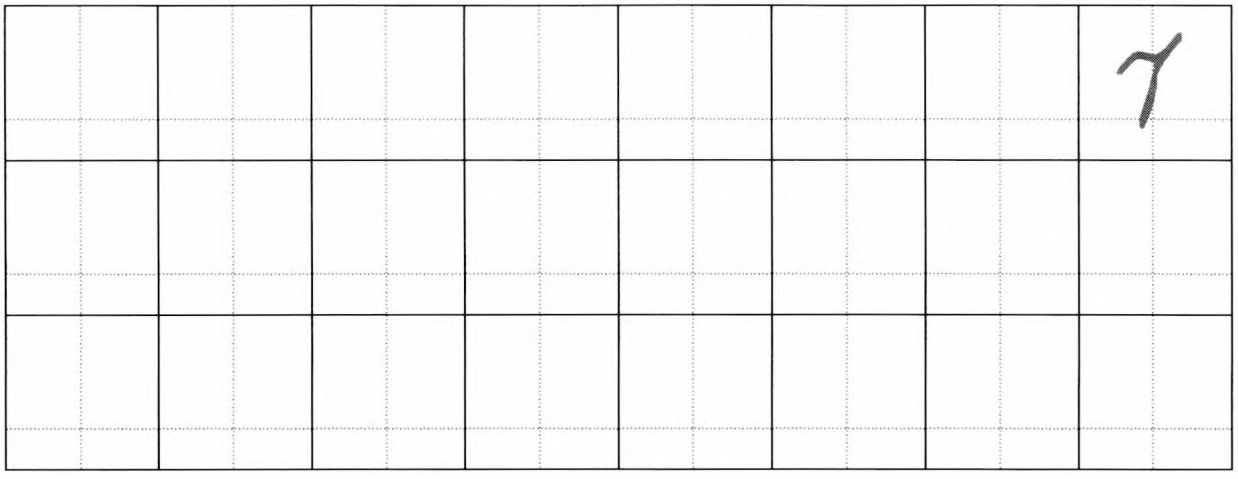
, ,



letter form

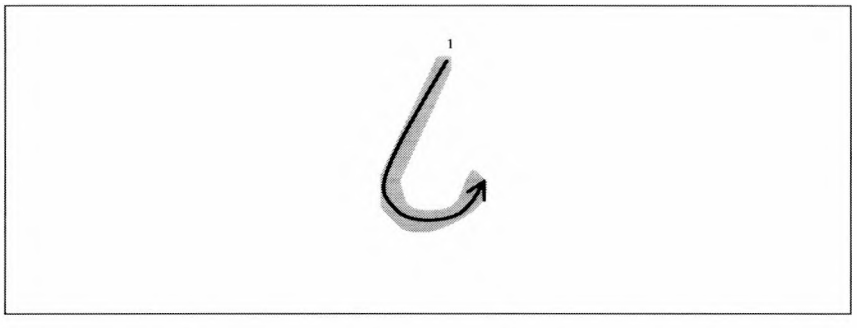
equivalents

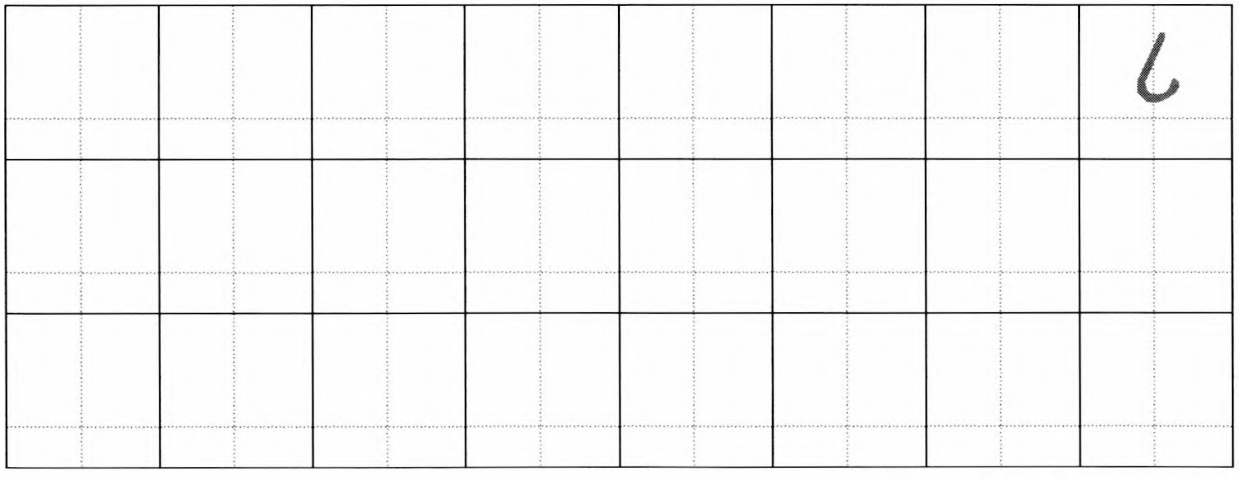




letter form

equivalents



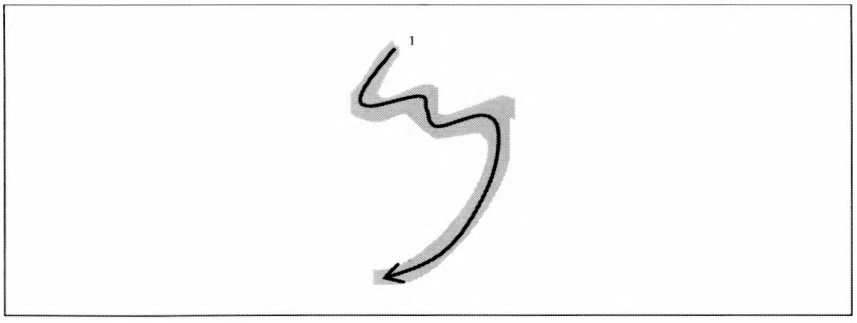


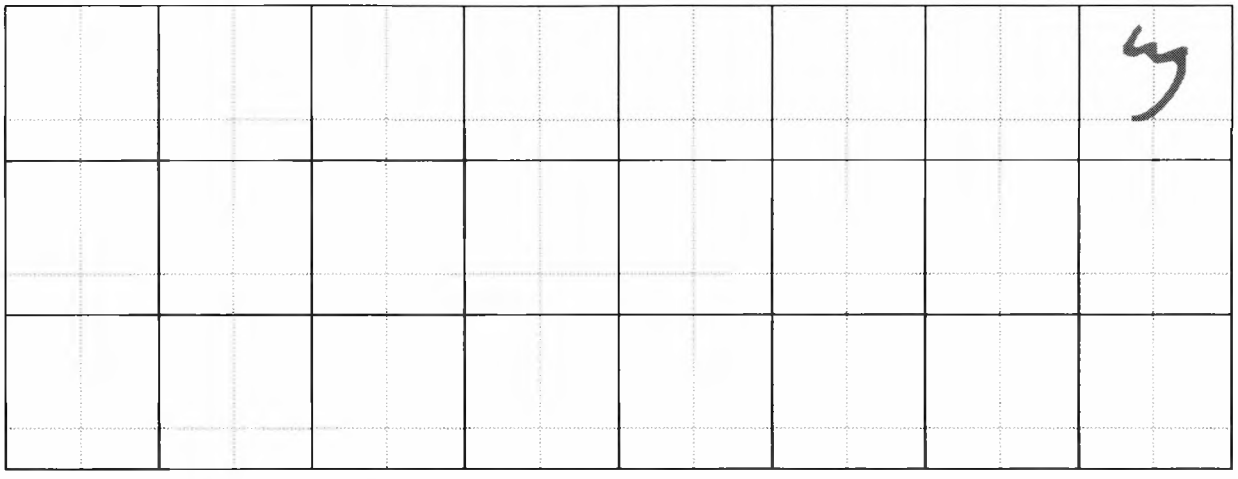
letter form

ע

equivalents

א מ



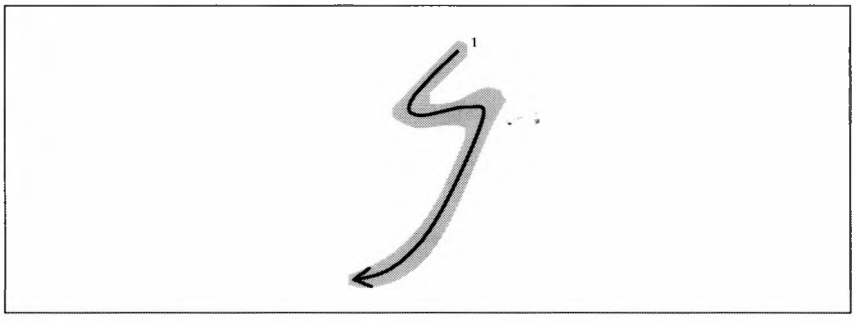


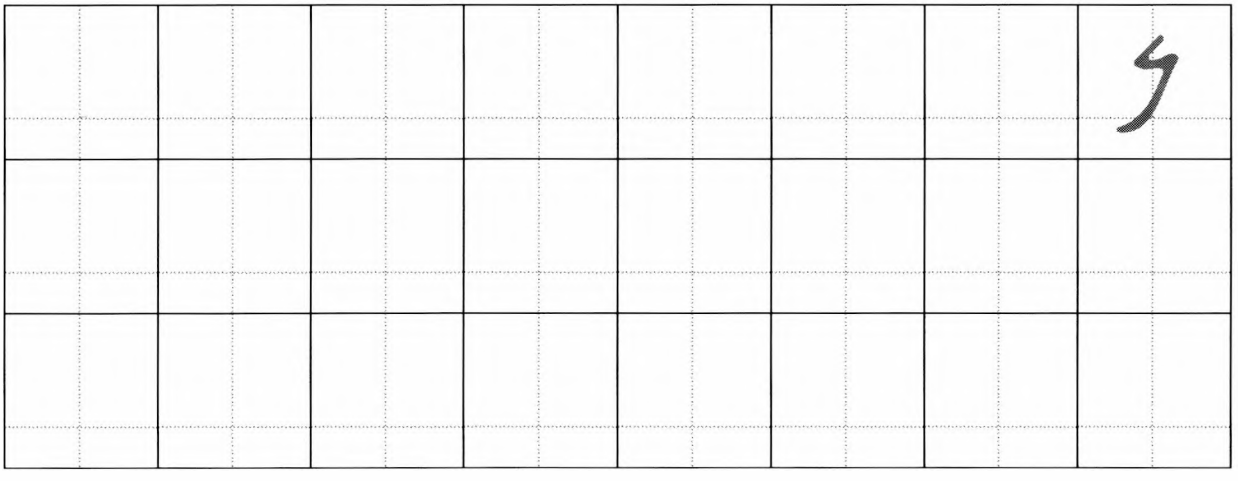
letter form

ע

equivalents

נ



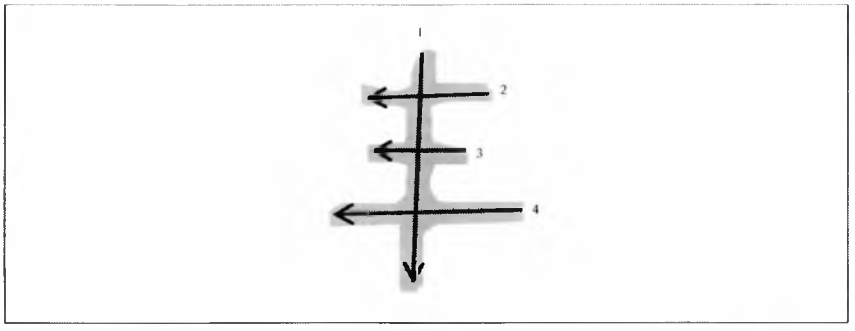


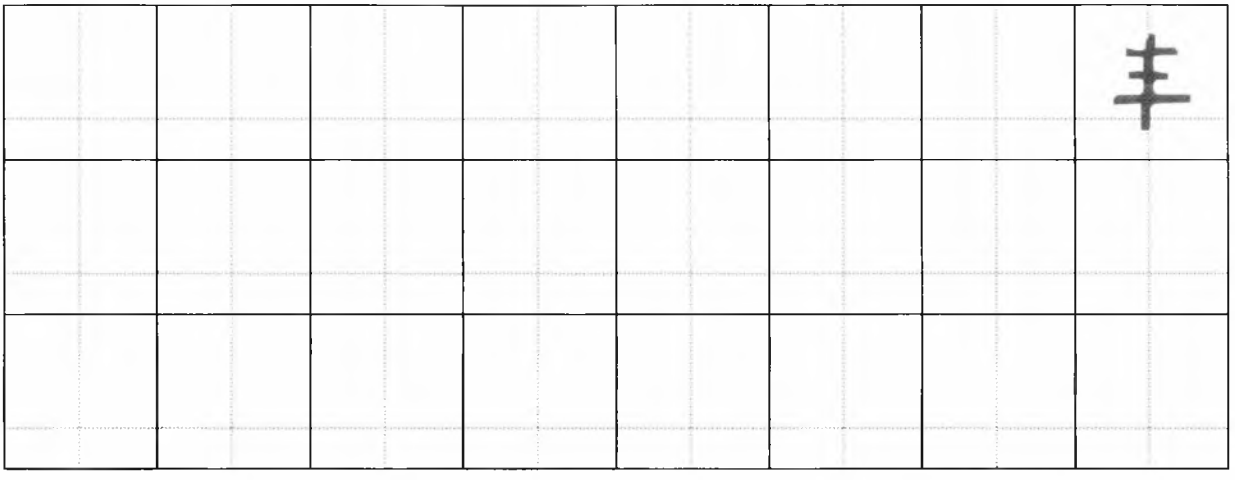
letter form

𐡎

equivalents

ס ס



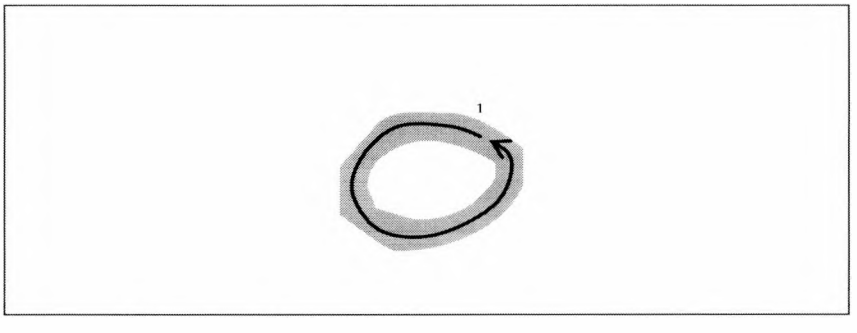


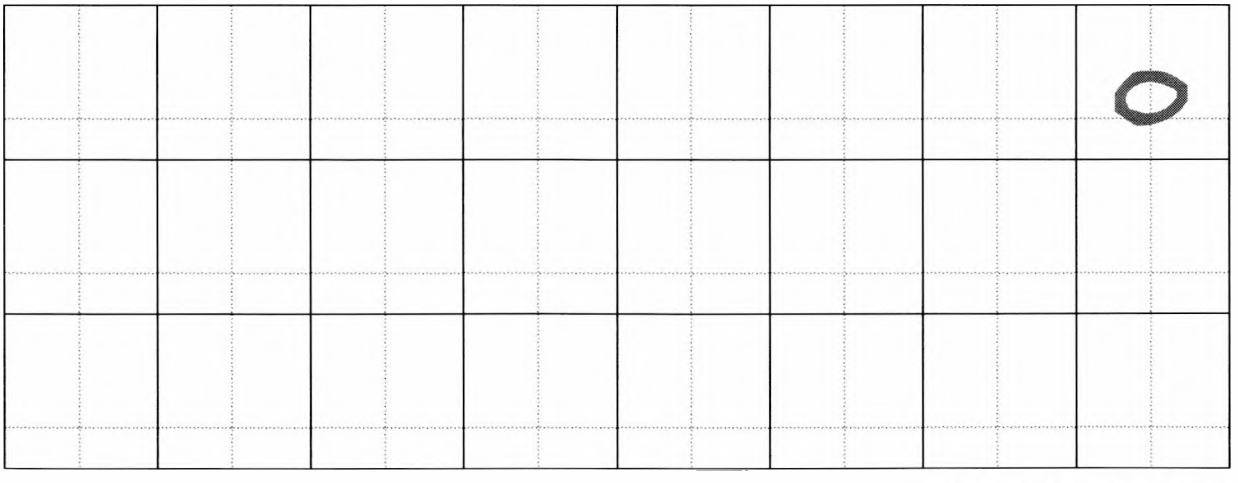
letter form

ס

equivalents

ע ר



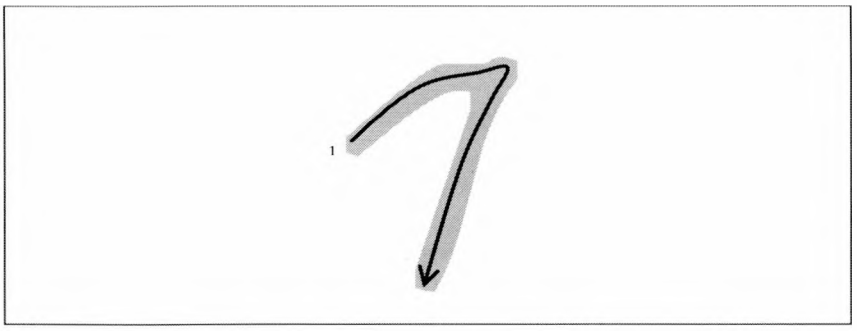


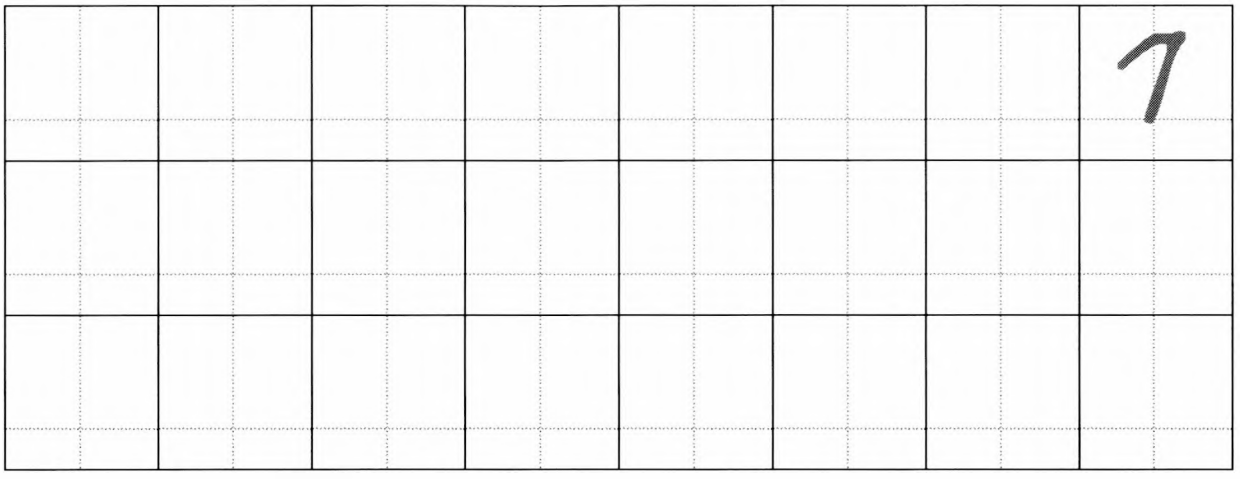
letter form

ד

equivalents

ڈ ڈ



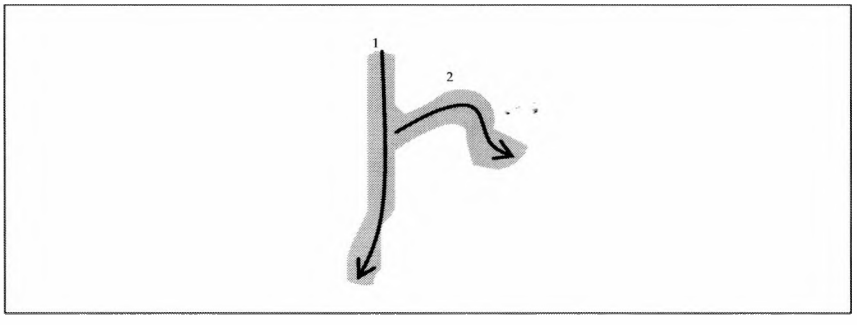


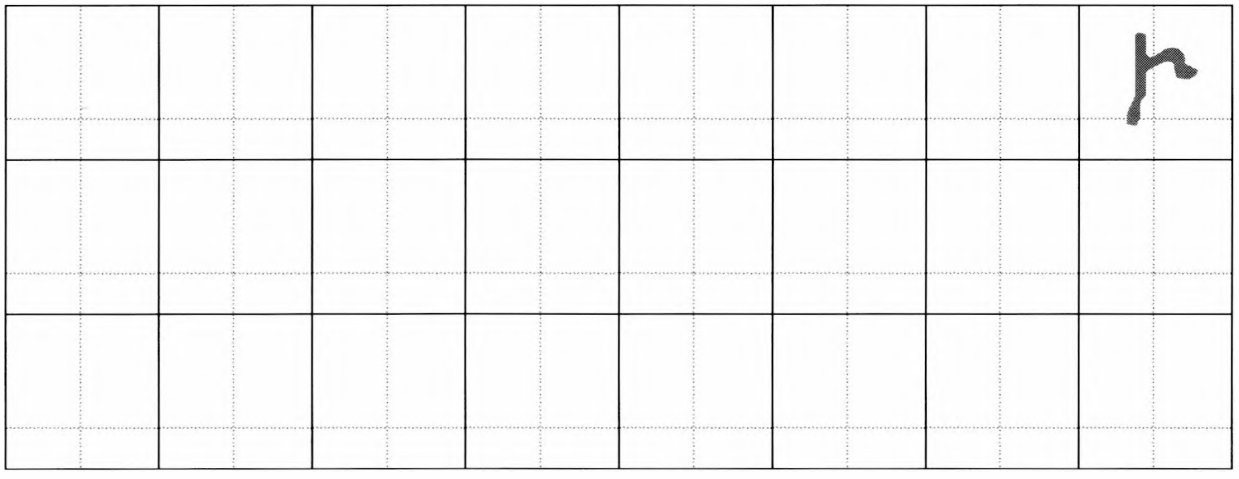
letter form

ה

equivalents

ۂ ۃ



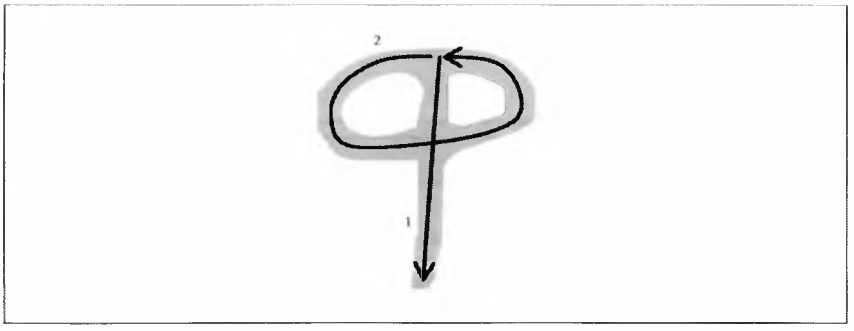


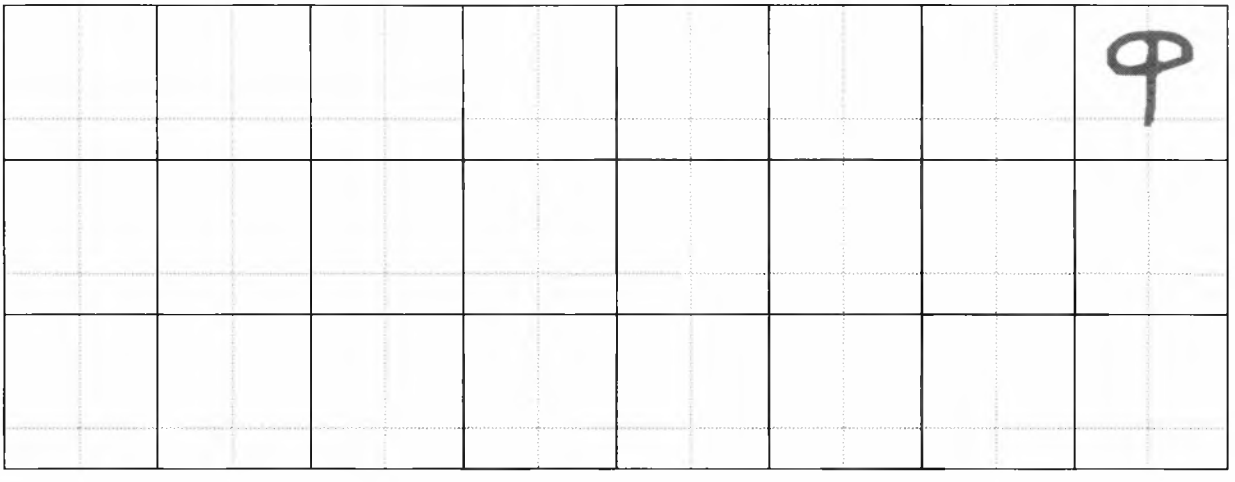
letter form

𐤐

equivalents

ק ס



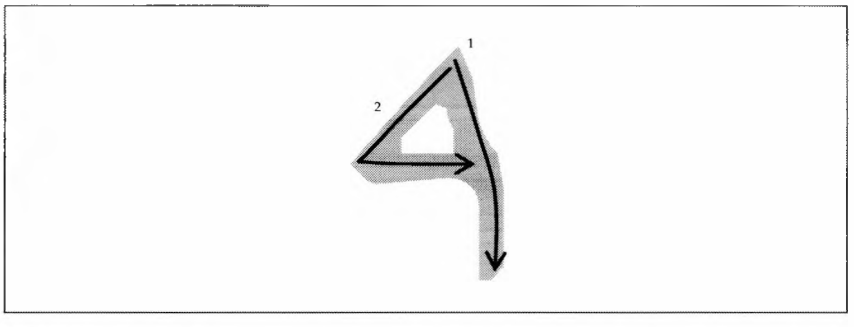


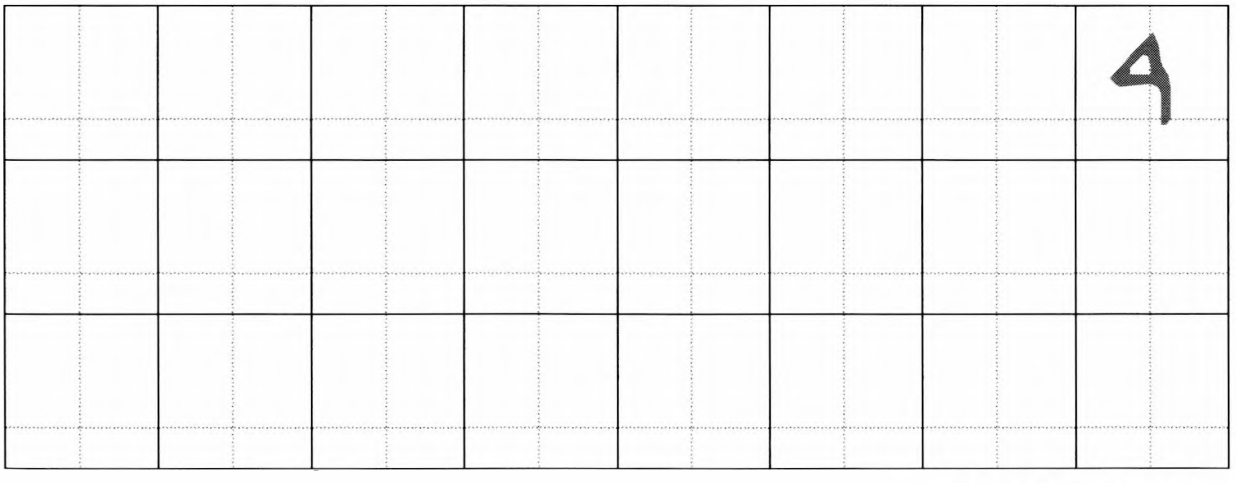
letter form

𐤑

equivalents

ד ז

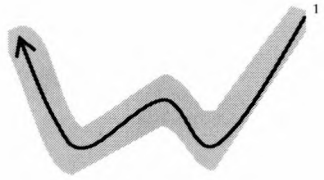


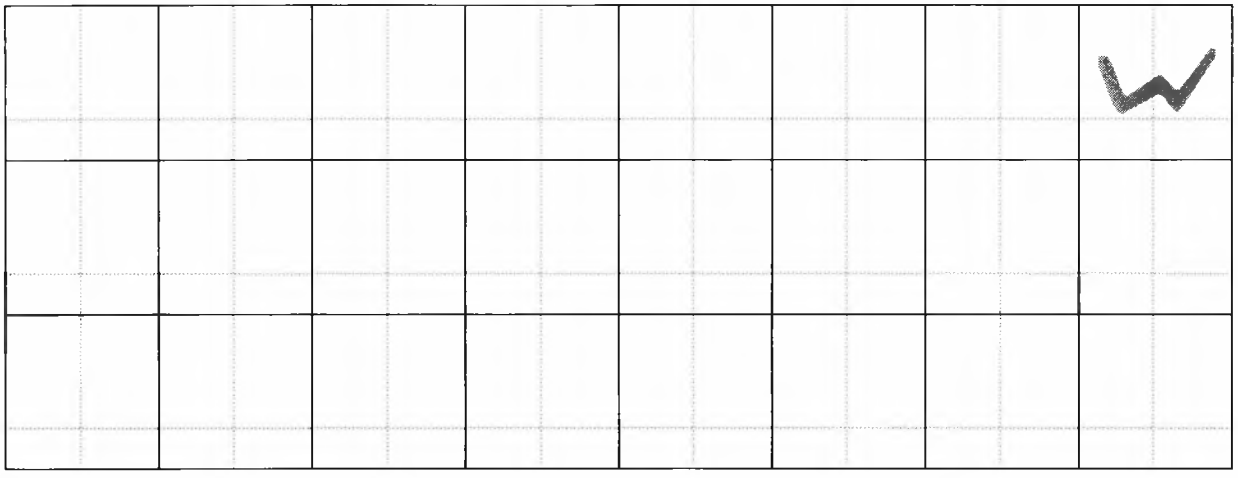


letter form

equivalents

𐡔 ש

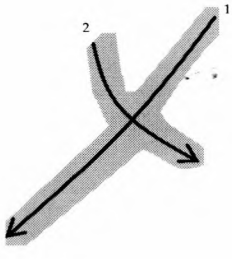


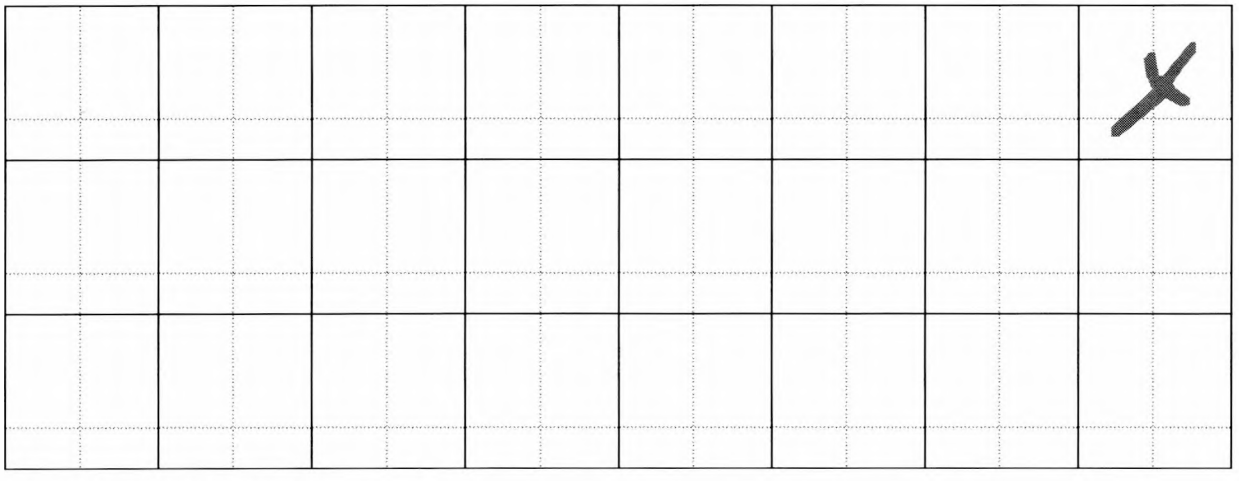


letter form

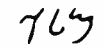
equivalents

ת ת

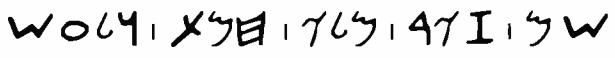




This early script appeared in stone inscriptions over 3,000 years ago. Early Aramaic epigraphy follows the same basic practices introduced for the square and cursive scripts above. Letters are written and read from right to left.

mlek		shmāk	
king	_____	*your name*	_____

Aramaic inscriptions include word breaks, often a dot or a vertical bar placed between individual words.



_____

shem zakir mlek ḥamat u-la'ash

(The) name (is) Zakir, King of Hamat and La'ash.

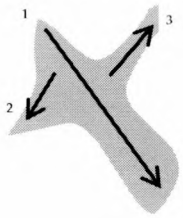
The early epigraphic script already employed *matres lectionis*, but vowel pointing and punctuation were not yet introduced into the script.

The Imperial Script

letter form

equivalents

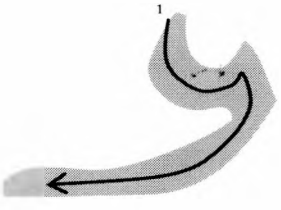
א ר



letter form

equivalents

ב ט

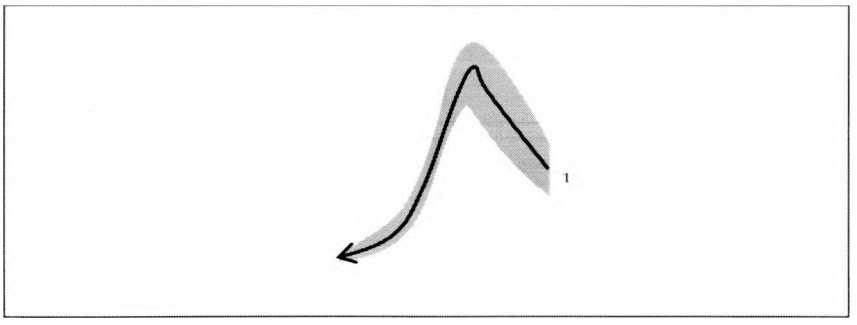


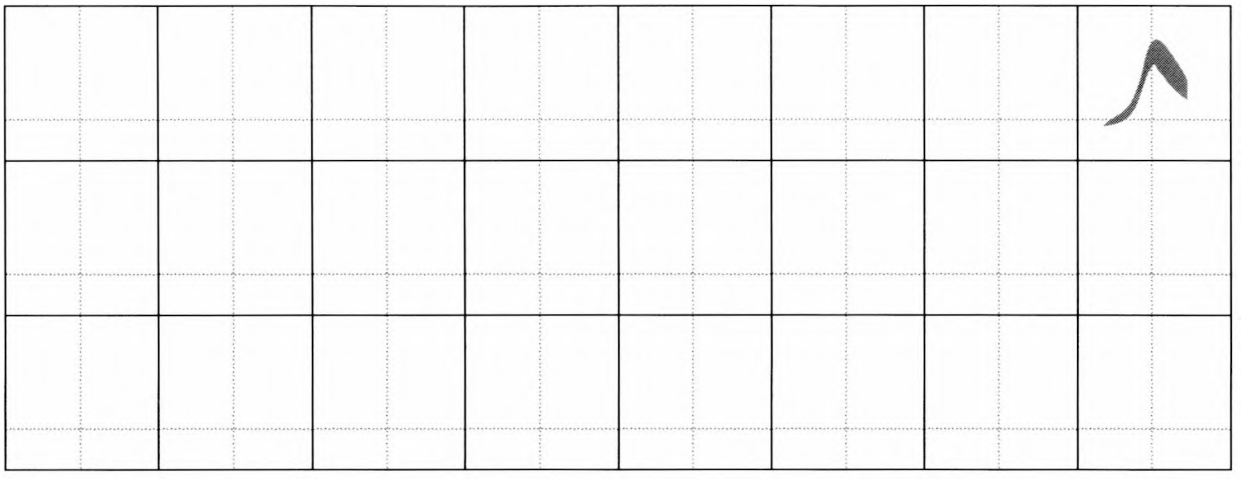
letter form

ﻫ

equivalents

ג ﻫ



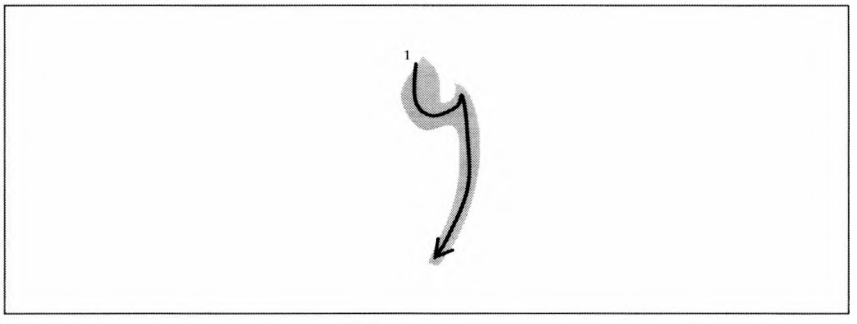


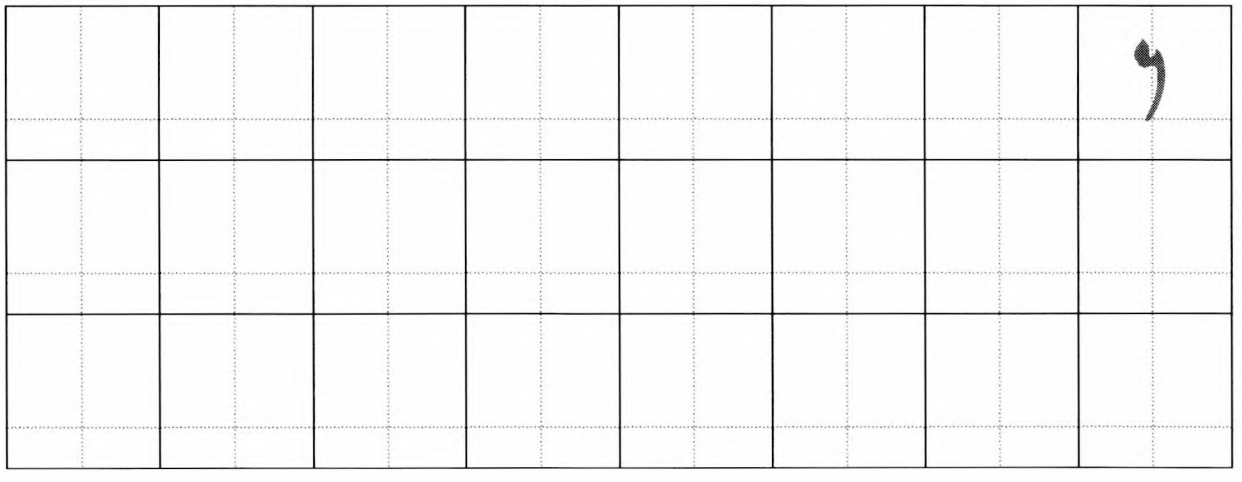
letter form

ﻭ

equivalents

ד ג

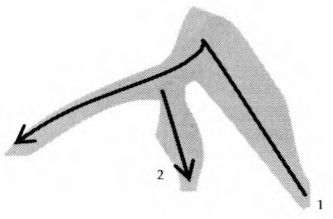




letter form

equivalents

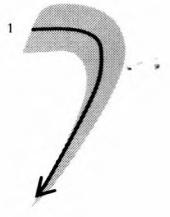
ה ם



letter form

equivalents

ו ס

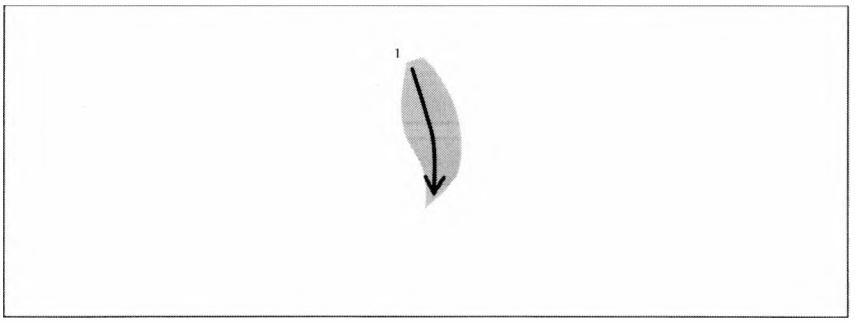


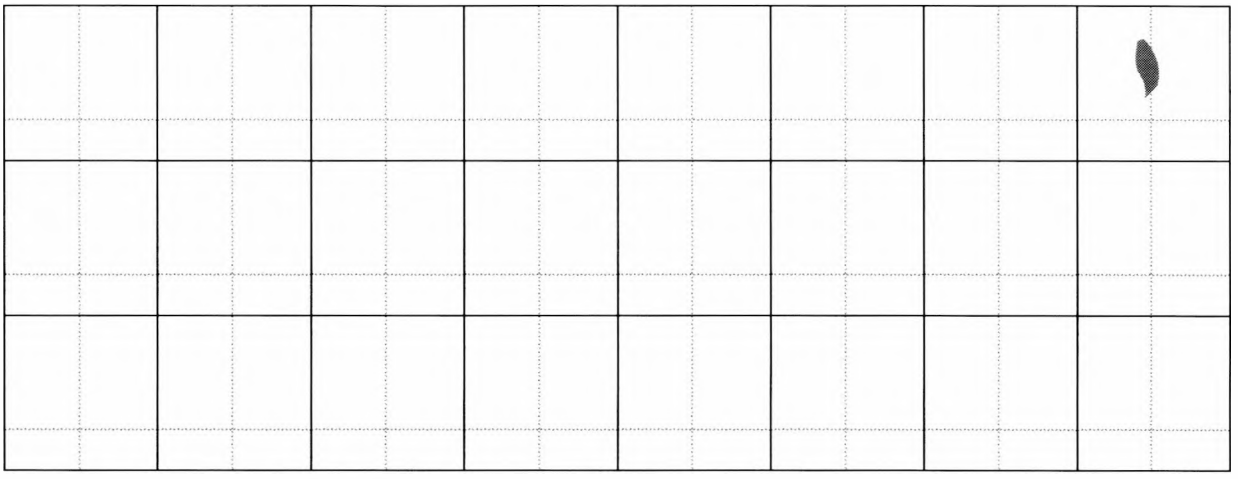
letter form

𐡀

equivalents

ʾ ا



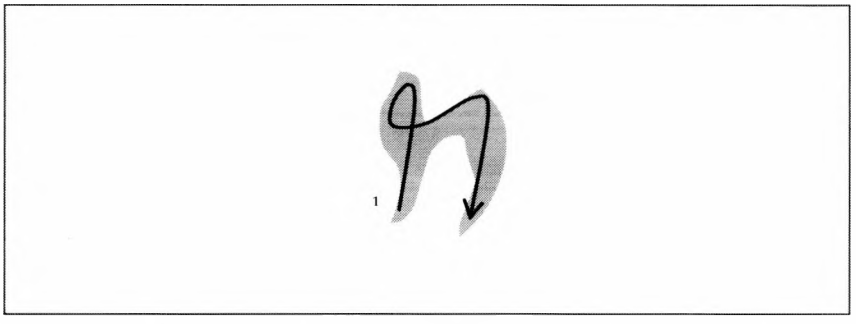


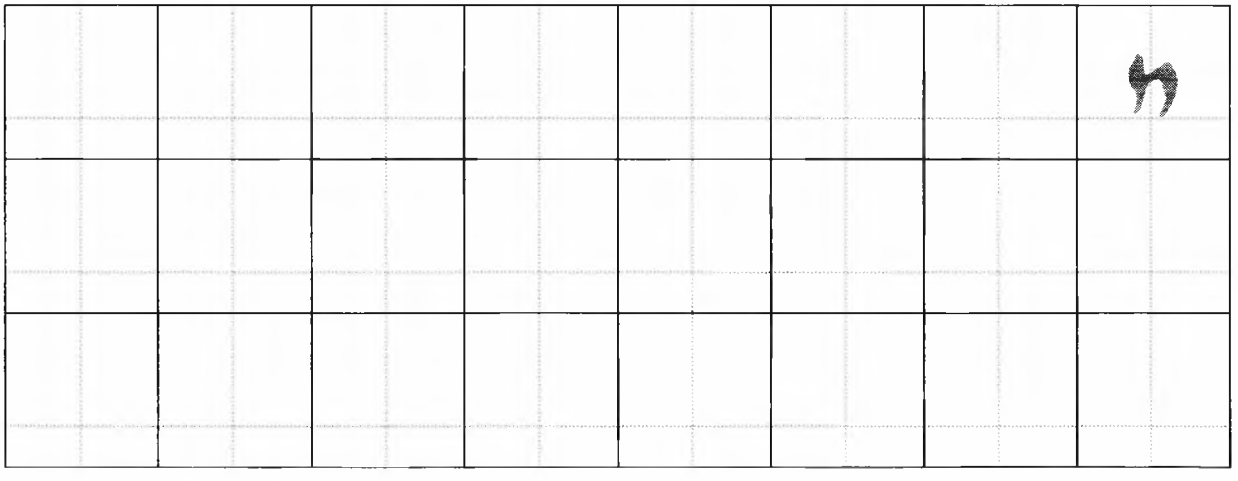
letter form

𐡃

equivalents

ب B



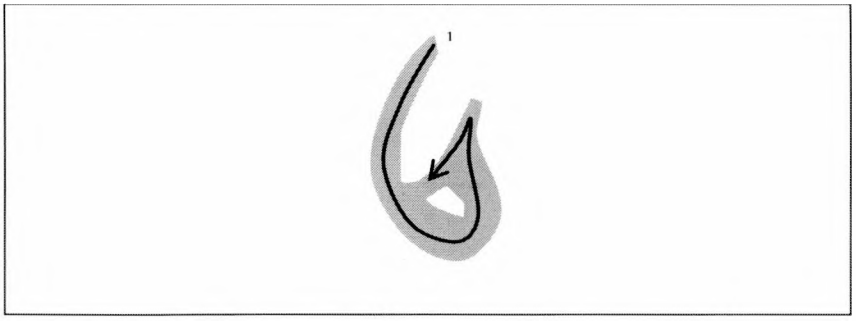


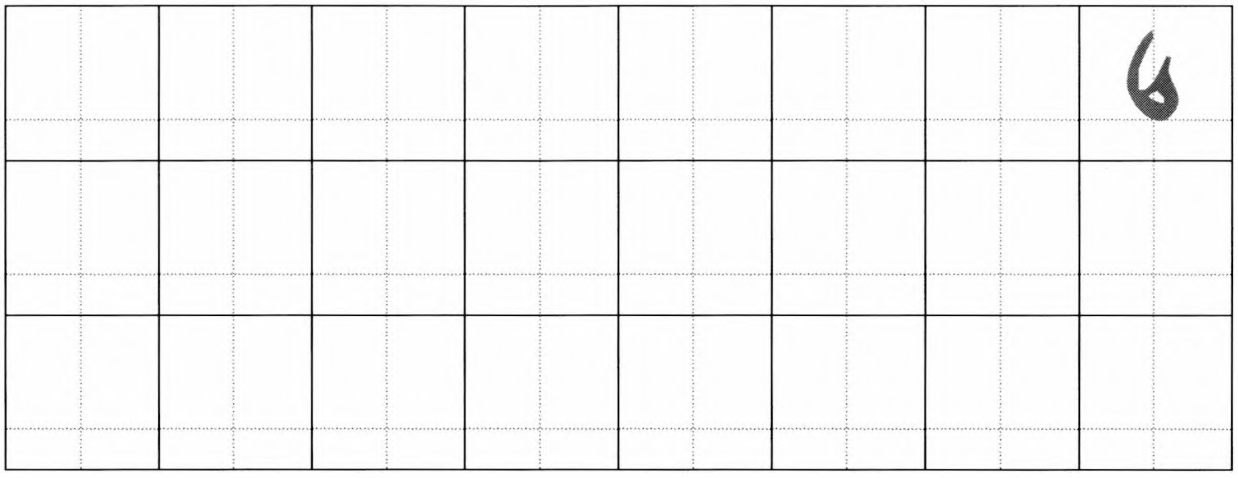
letter form

ה

equivalents

ה ה





letter form

א

equivalents

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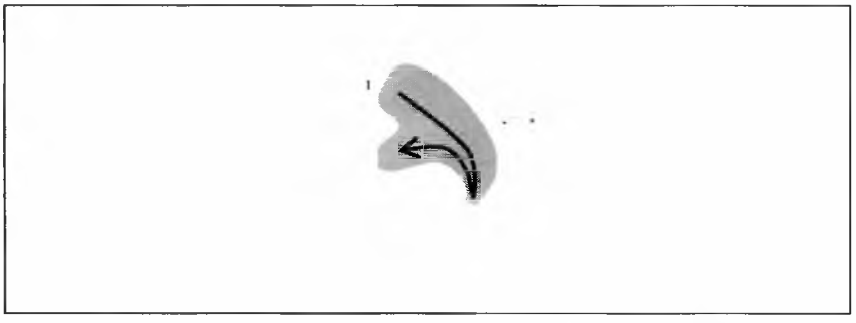
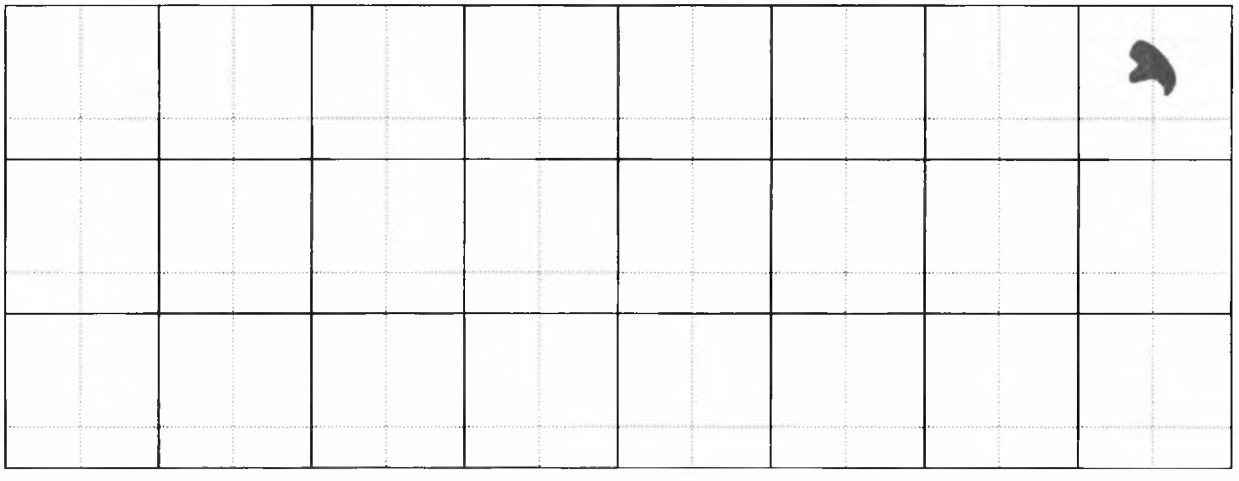


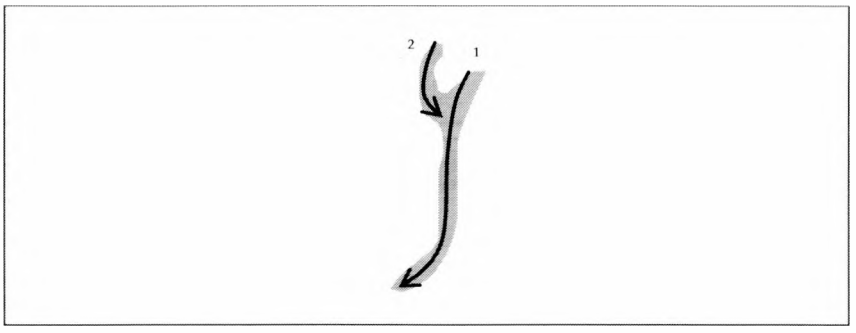


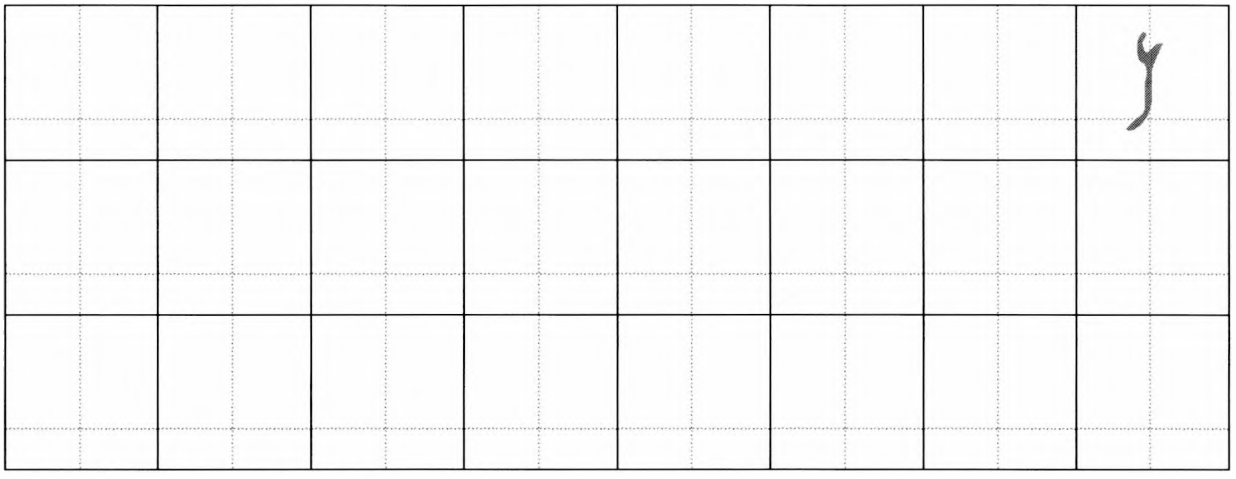
letter form

ﻛ

equivalents

ﻙ ﻚ





letter form

ﻟ

equivalents

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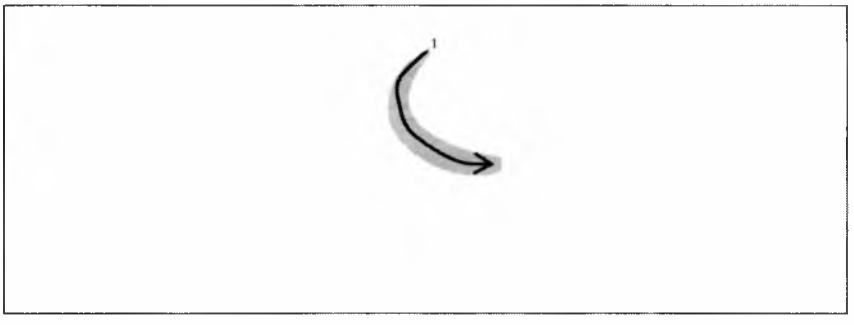

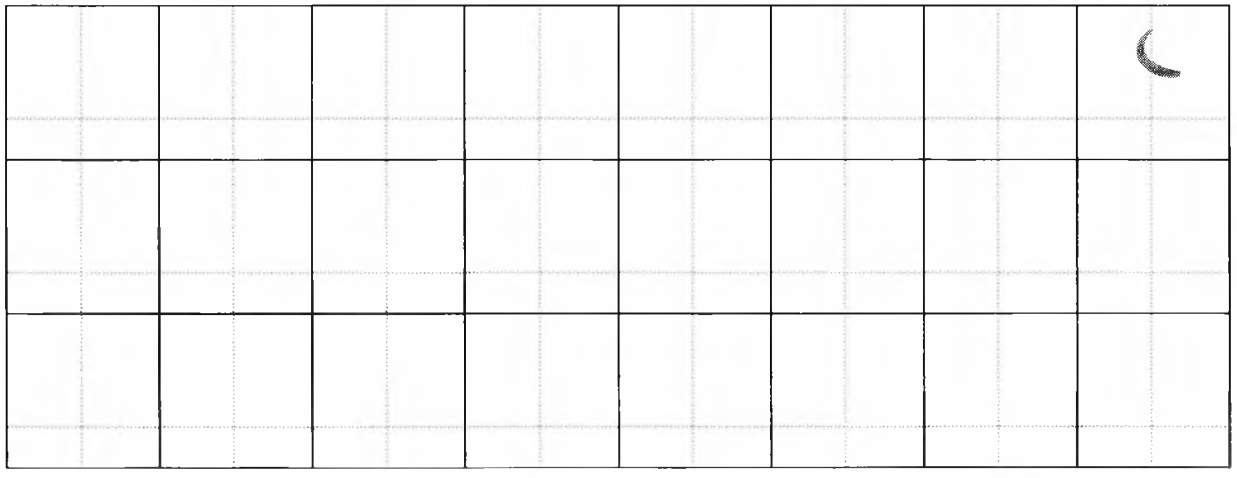

letter form

ר

equivalents

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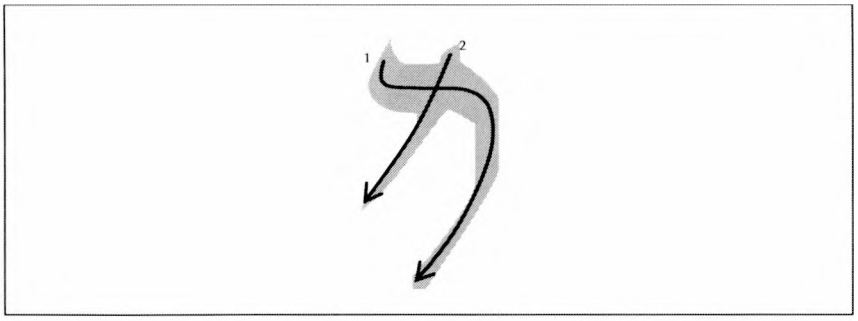

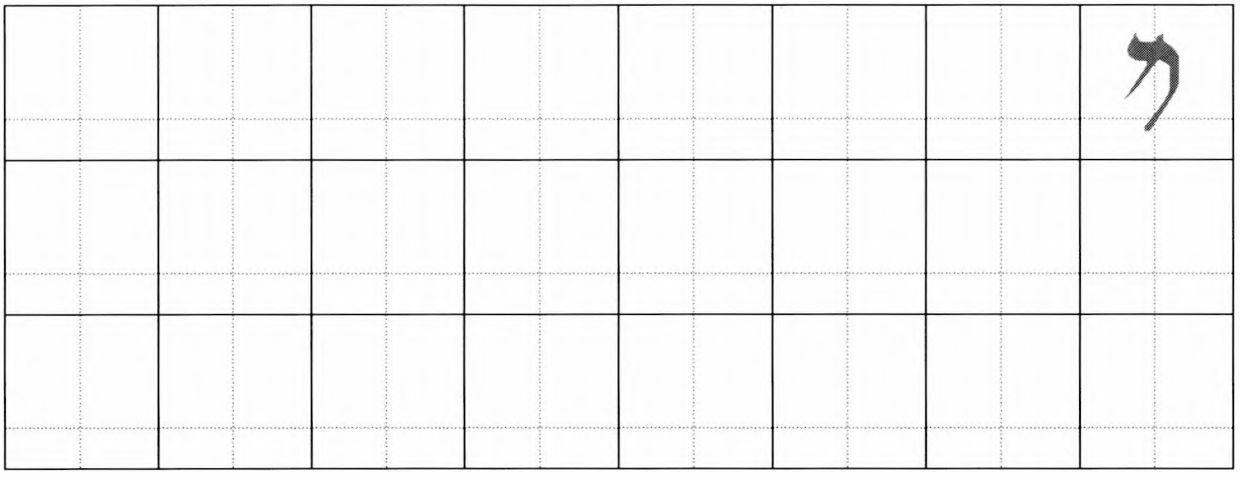

letter form

ן

equivalents

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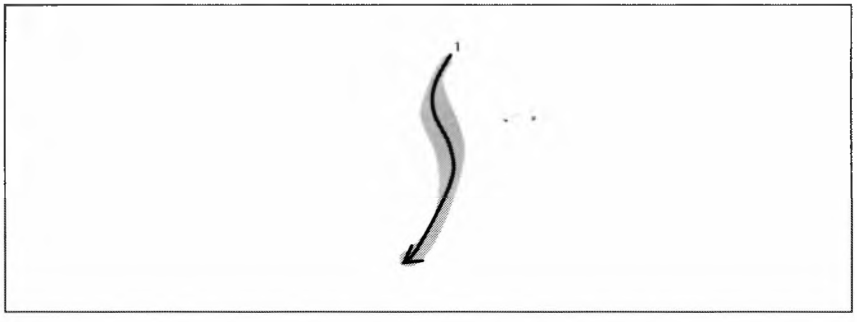
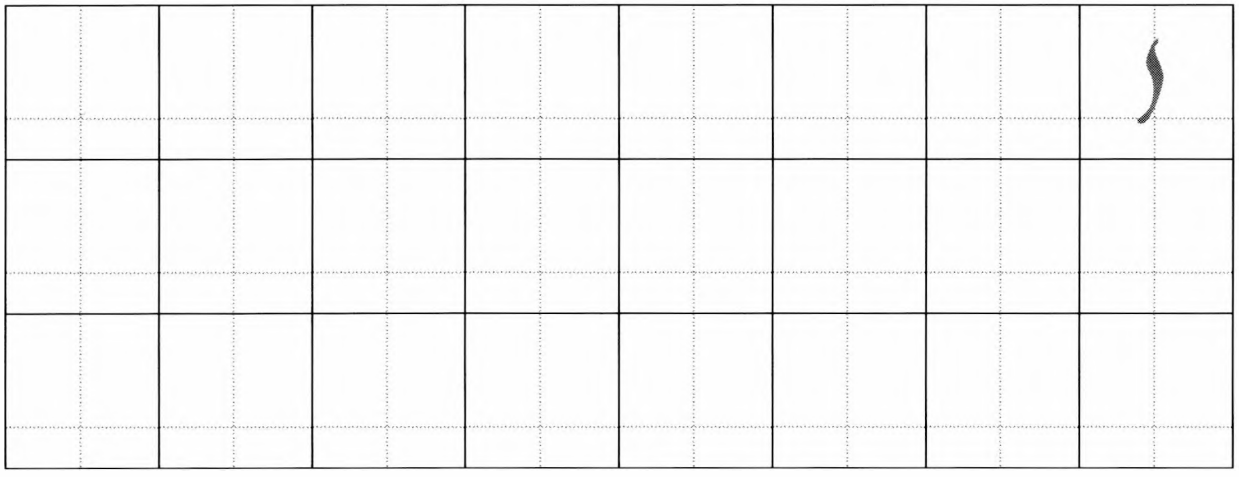




letter form

equivalents

ס ס

letter form

equivalents

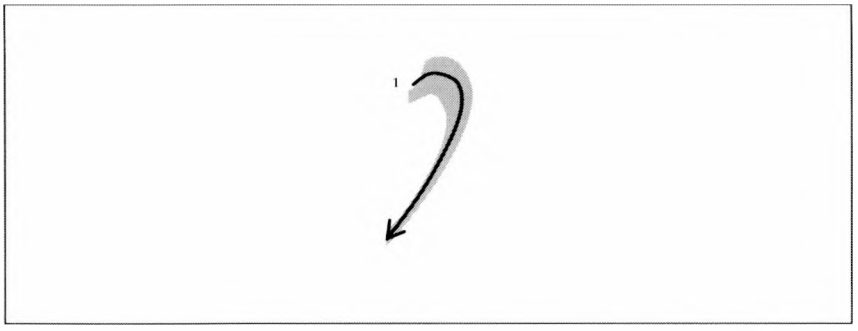
ע ע

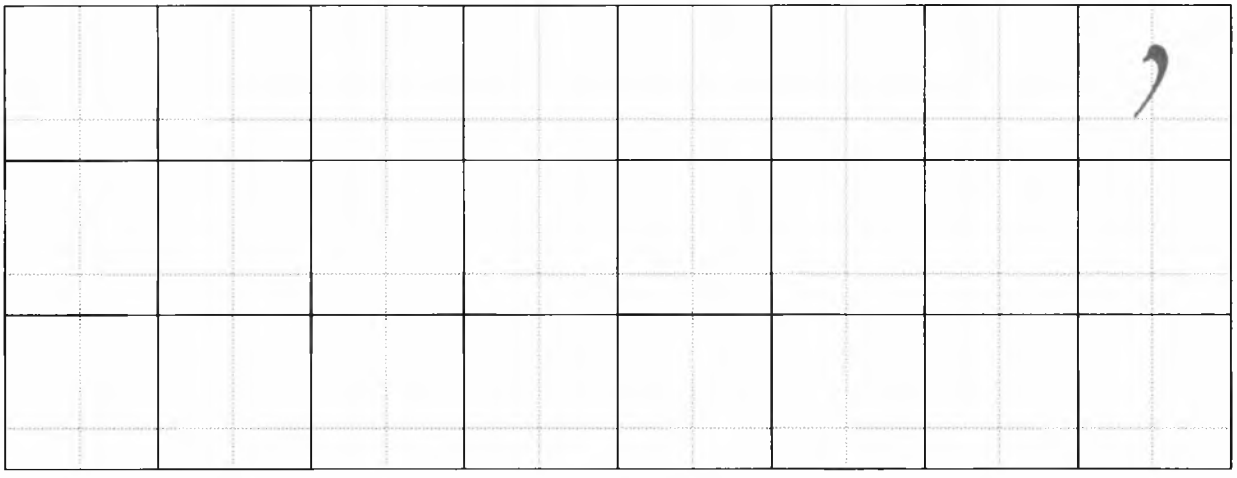
letter form

ר

equivalents

ה ך



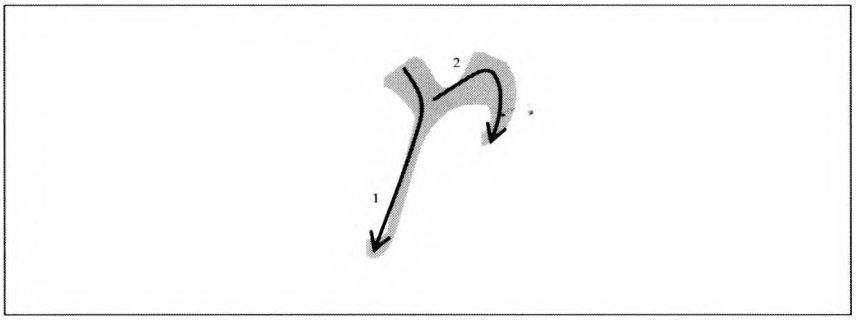


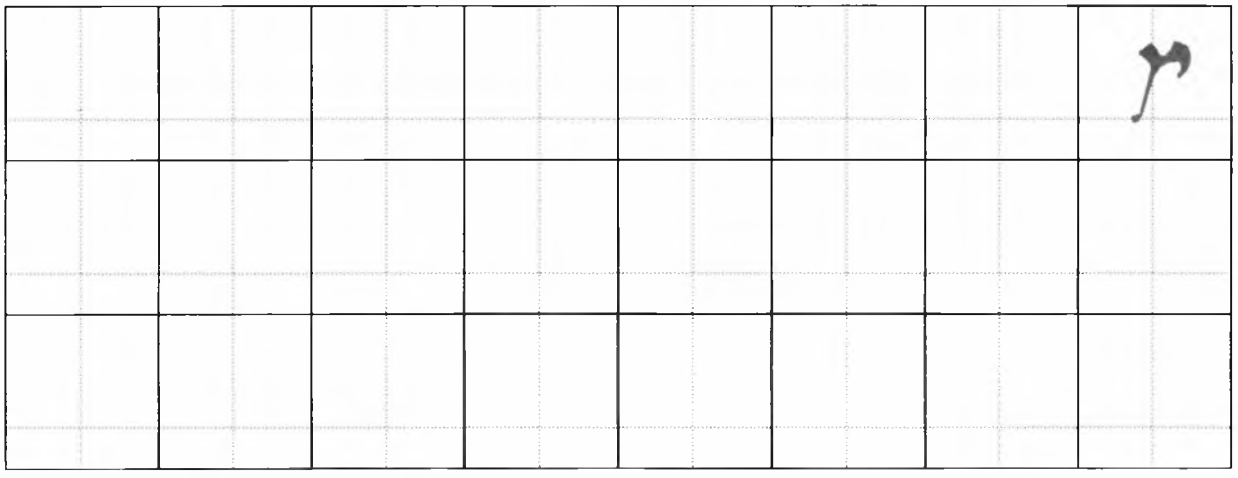
letter form

ח

equivalents

צ ץ



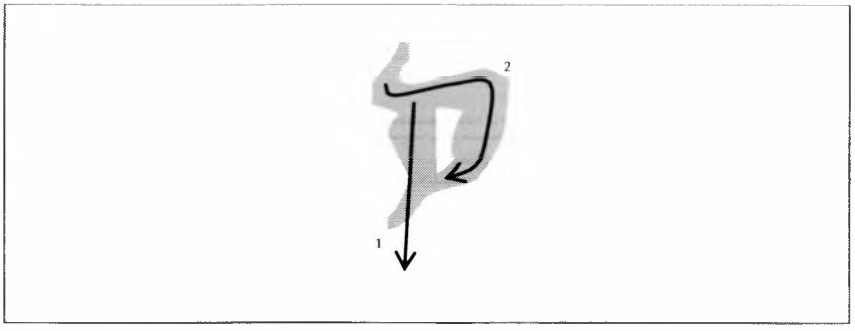


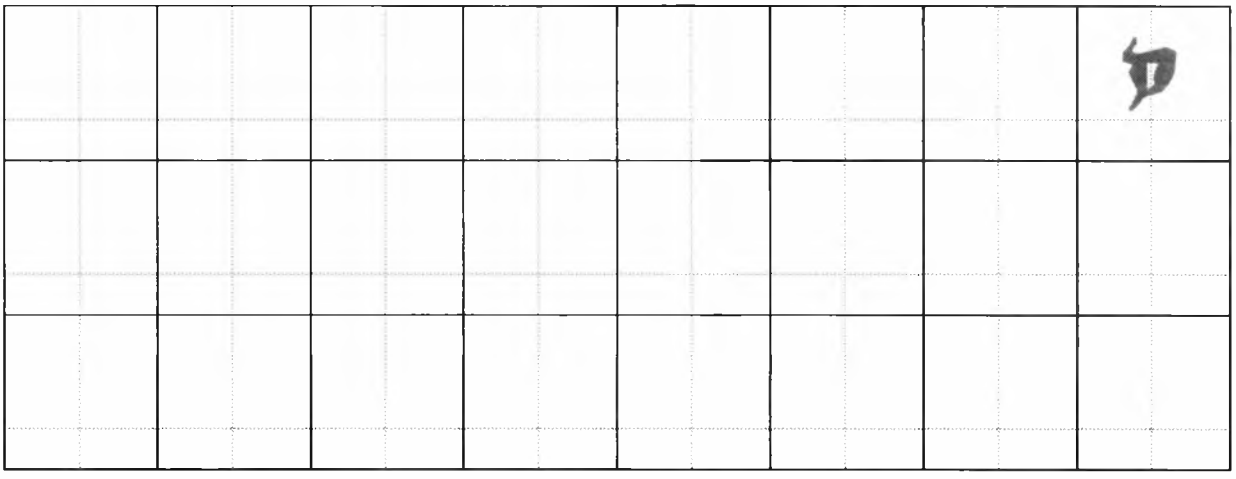
letter form

פ

equivalents

פ ק



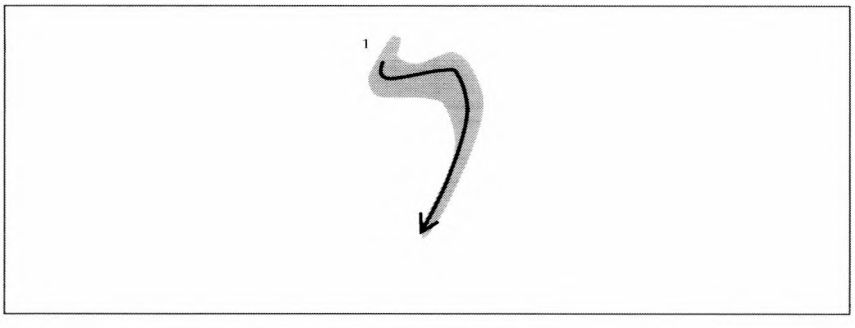


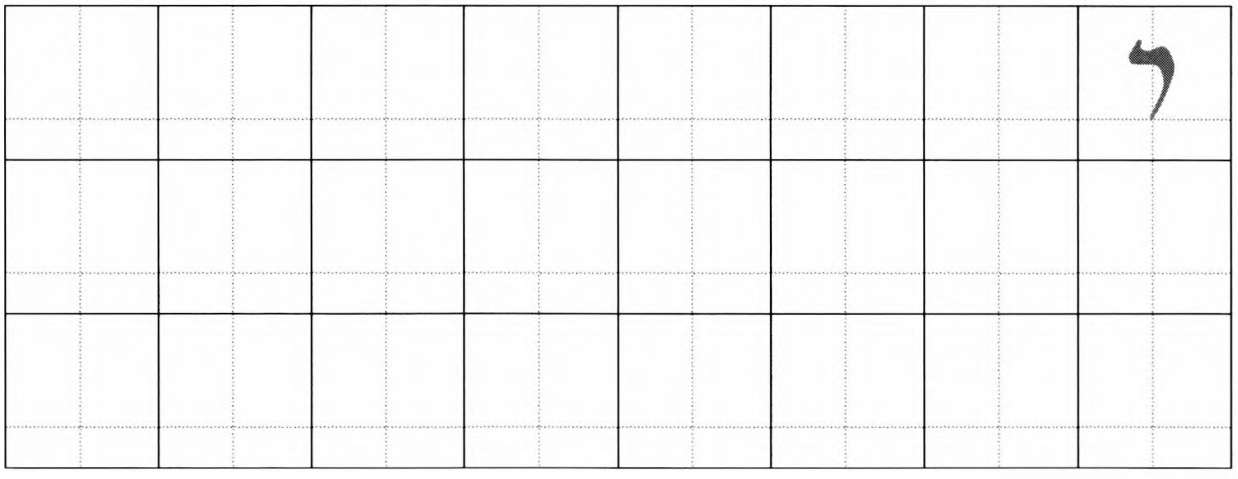
letter form

ל

equivalents

ל ו



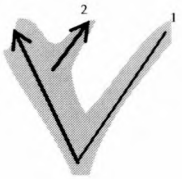


letter form

ܙ

equivalents

ש ס



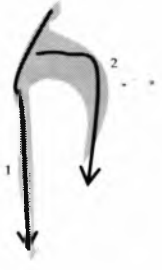
ܙ

letter form

ܗ

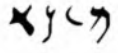
equivalents

ת ה

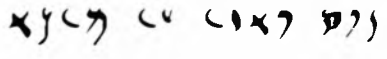


ܗ

The Imperial Script developed as the administrative writing system of the Persian Empire more than 2,500 years ago. Famously attested in the Elephantine papyri, Imperial Aramaic follows the same basic practices introduced for the square and cursive scripts above. Letters are written and read from right to left.

malkā		shmāk	
king	_____	*your name*	_____

Official writings include clear word breaks in the form of a blank space between individual words.

npaq u-ʾăzal ʿal malkā	
He left and went to the king.	_____

Like the later square and cursive scripts, Achaemenid Aramaic used certain consonants as *matres lectionis*. However, no system of vowel pointing or formalized punctuation yet existed.

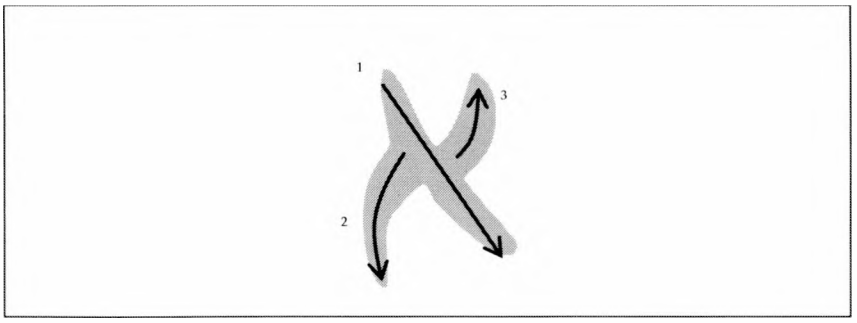
The Herodian Script

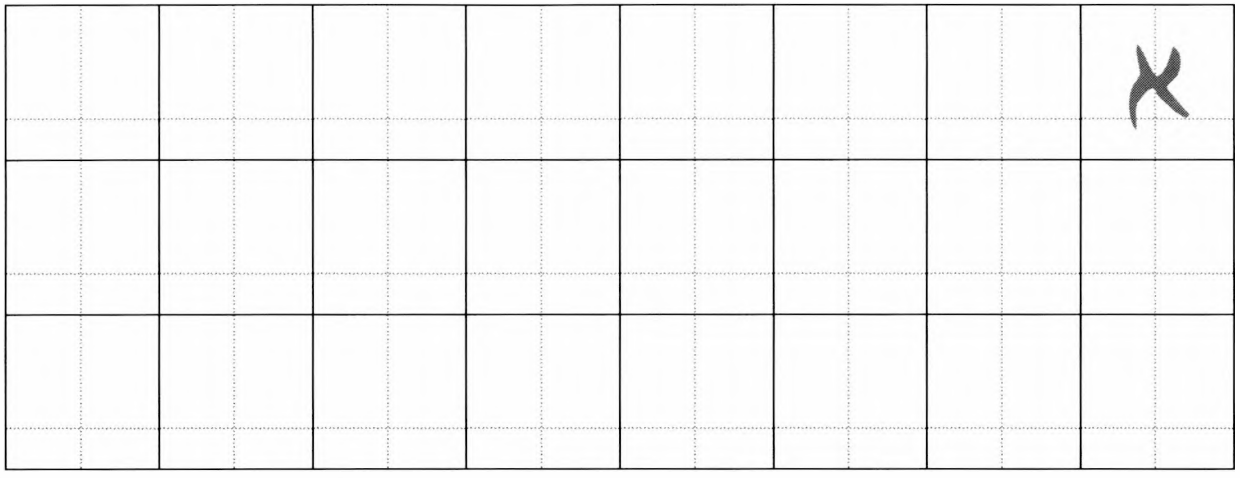
letter form

א

equivalents

א ﻫ



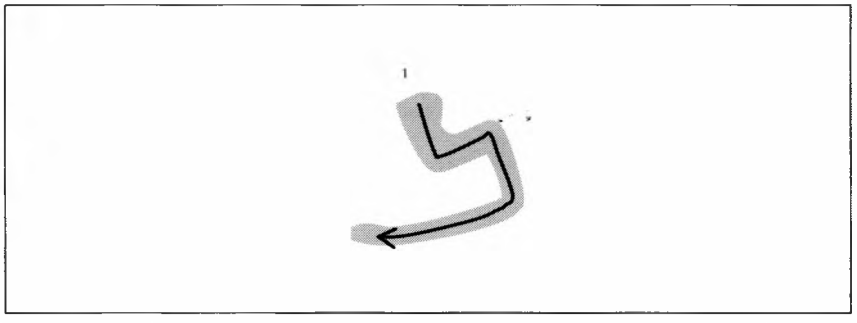


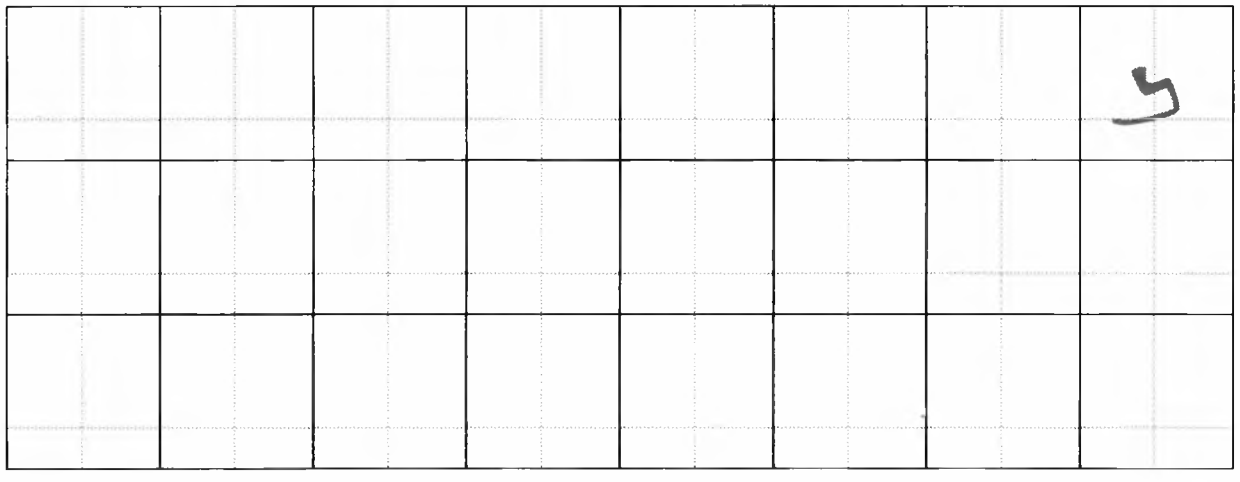
letter form

ב

equivalents

ב ם

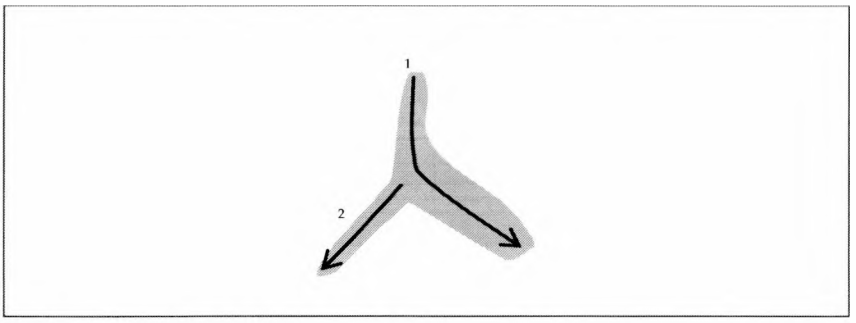




letter form

equivalents

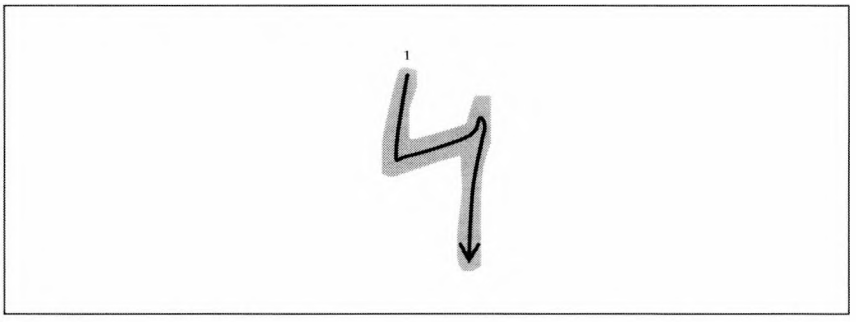
ג



letter form

equivalents

ז ג

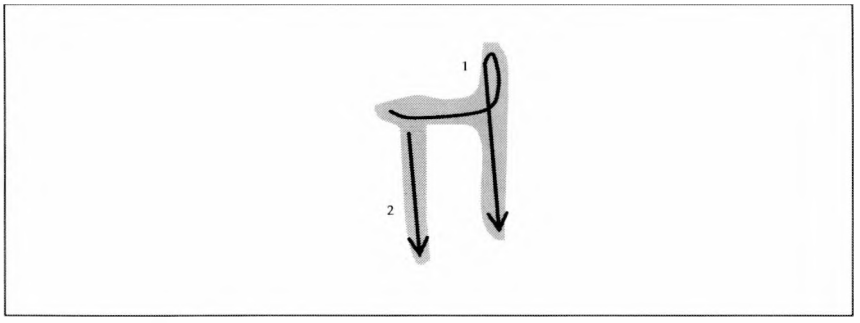


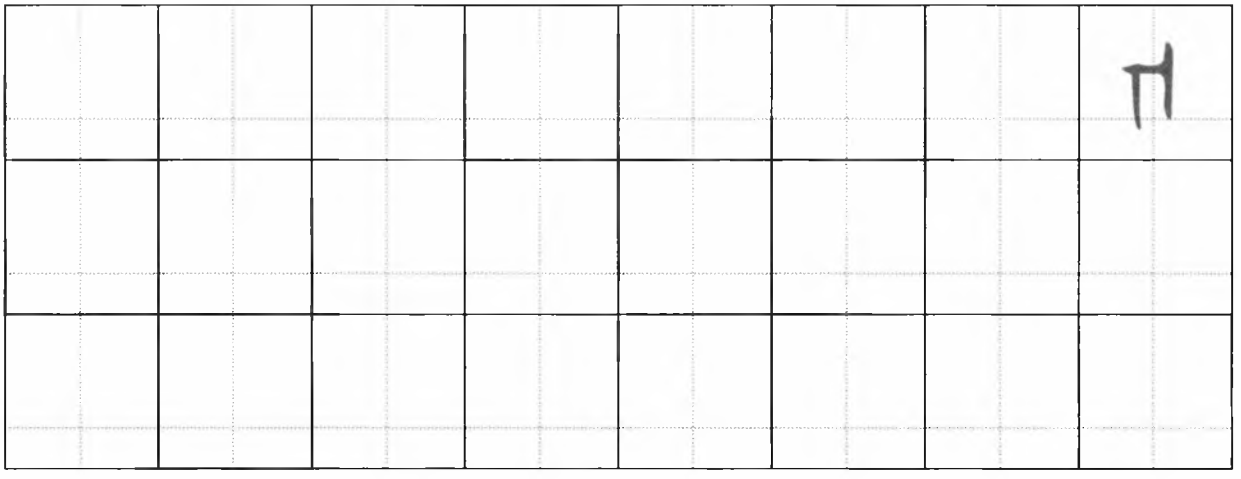
letter form

ה

equivalents

ה ם





letter form

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equivalents

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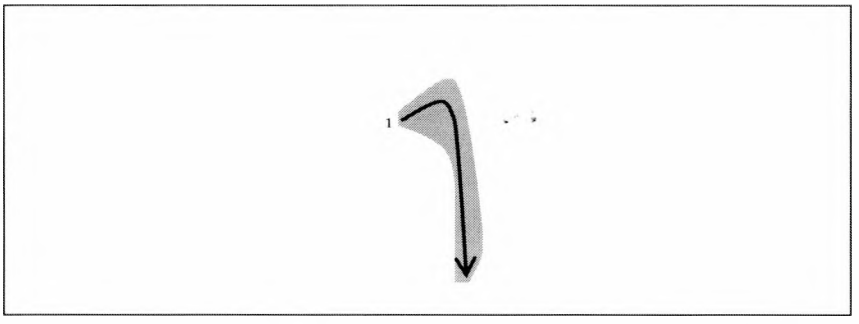

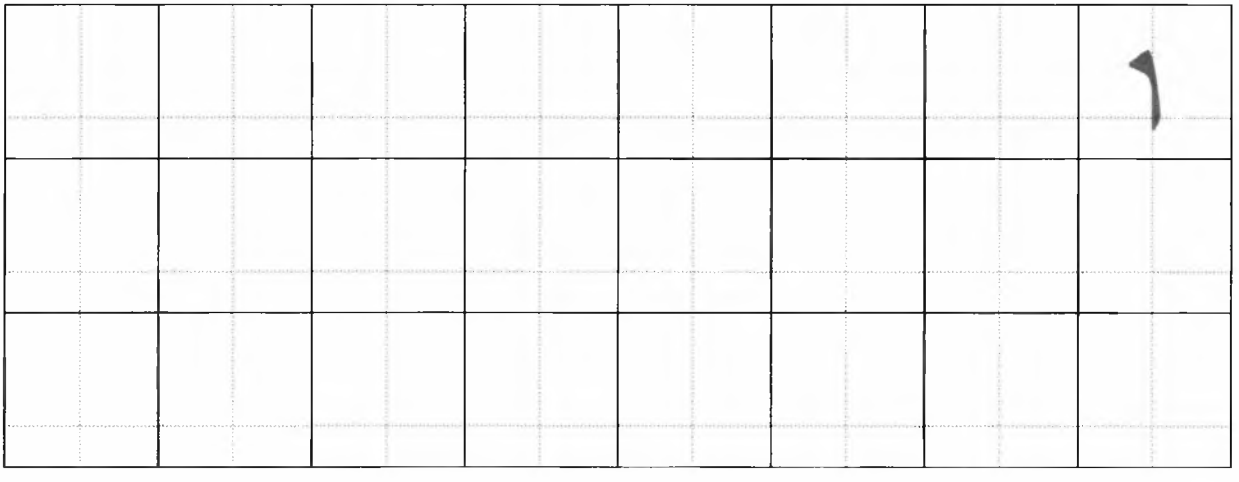

letter form

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equivalents

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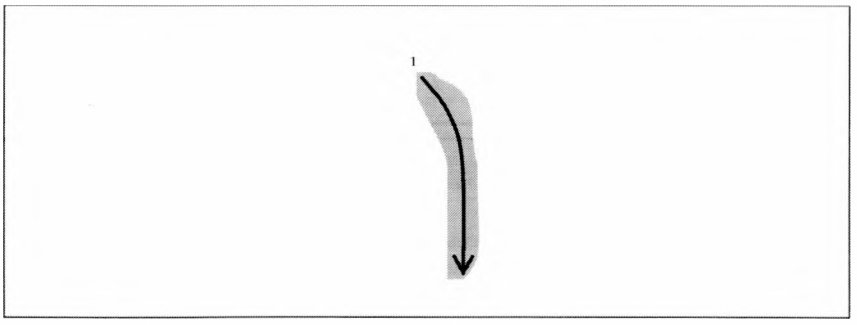

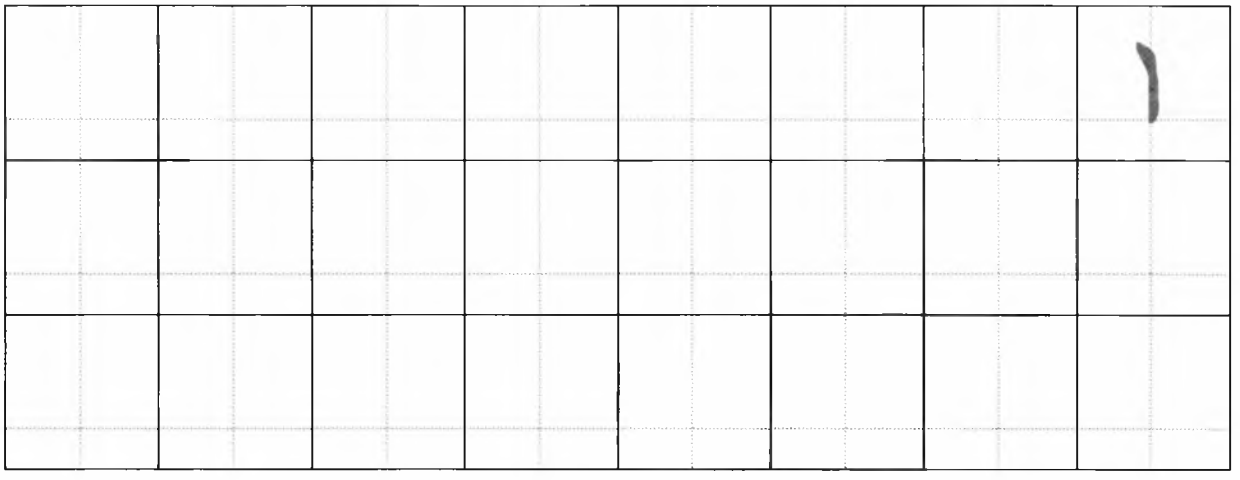

letter form

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equivalents

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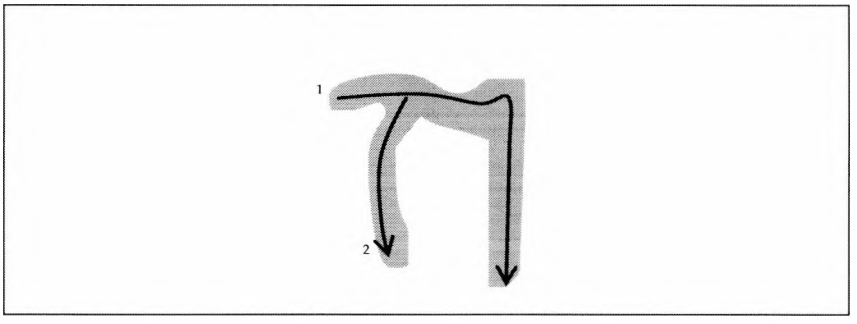

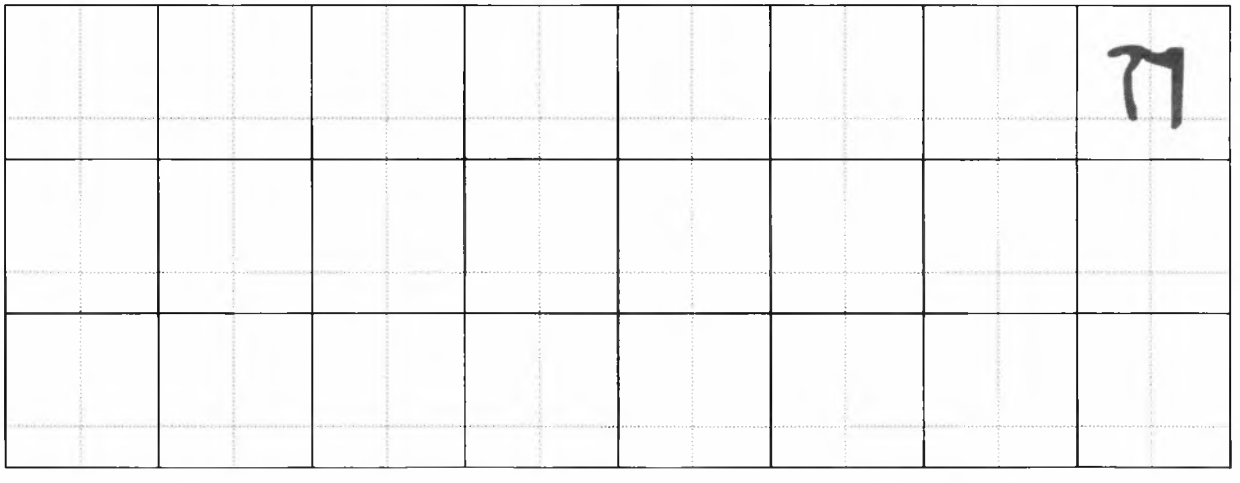

letter form

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equivalents

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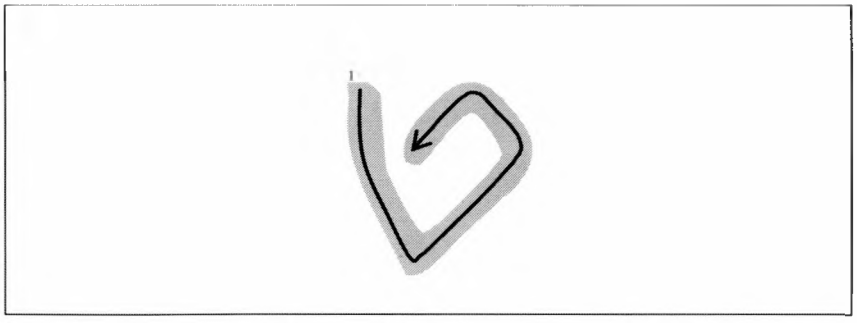

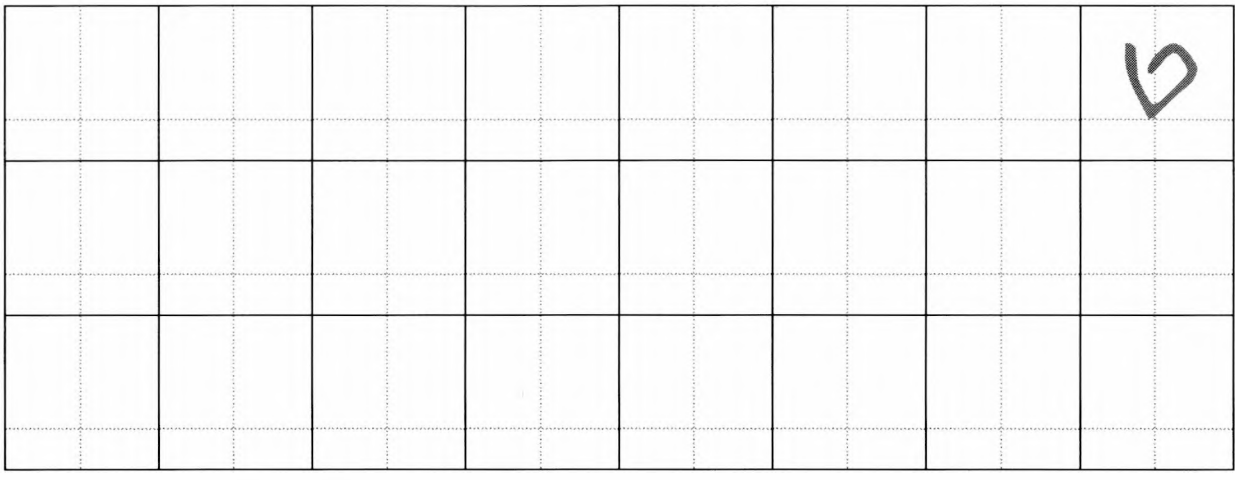

letter form

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equivalents

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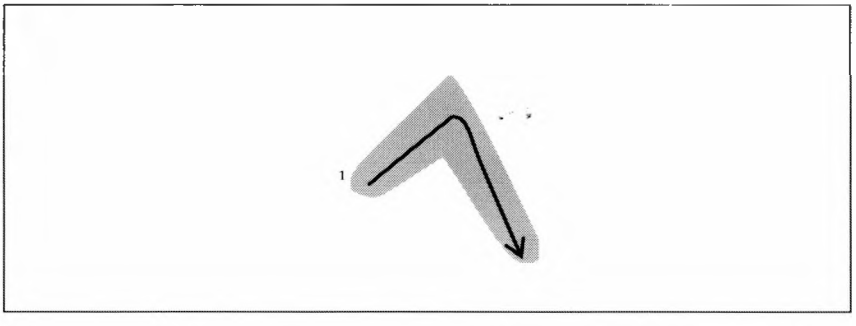

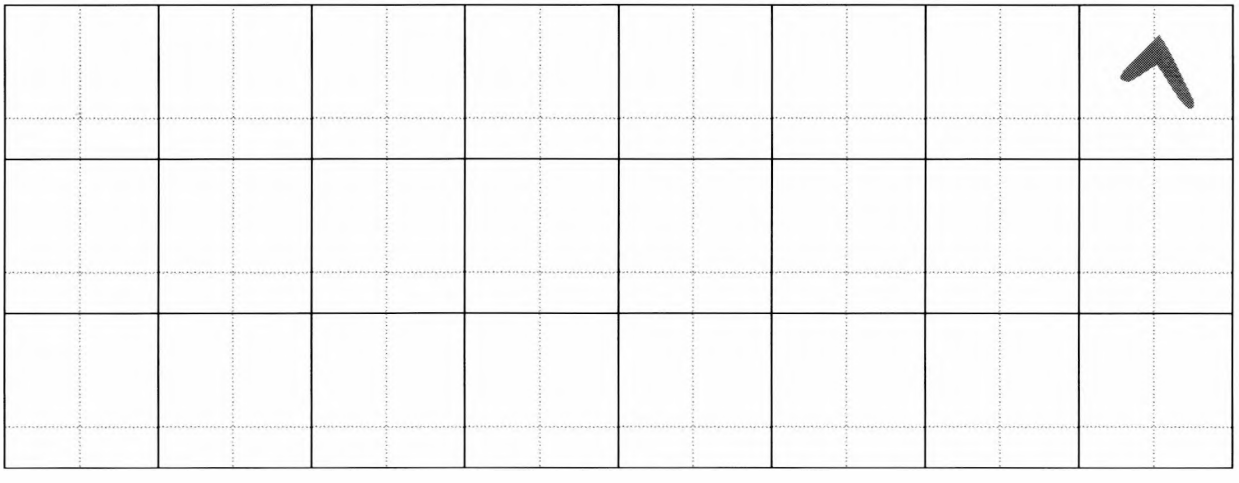

letter form

כ

equivalents

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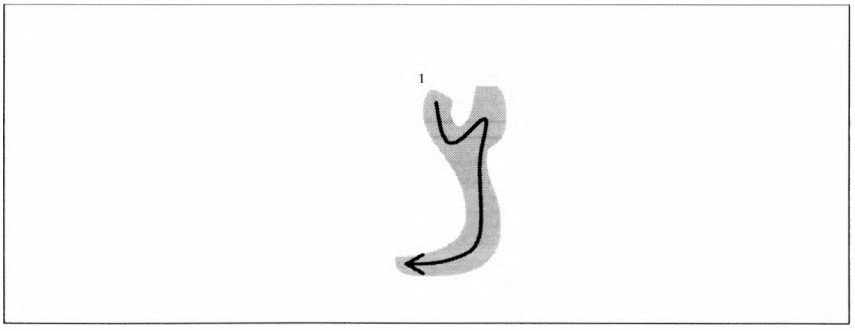
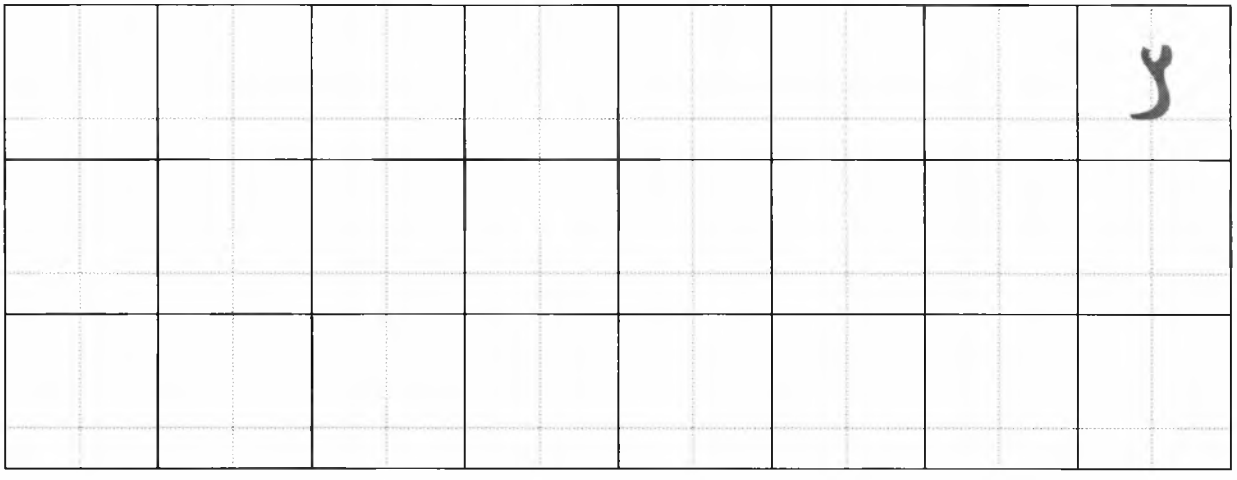


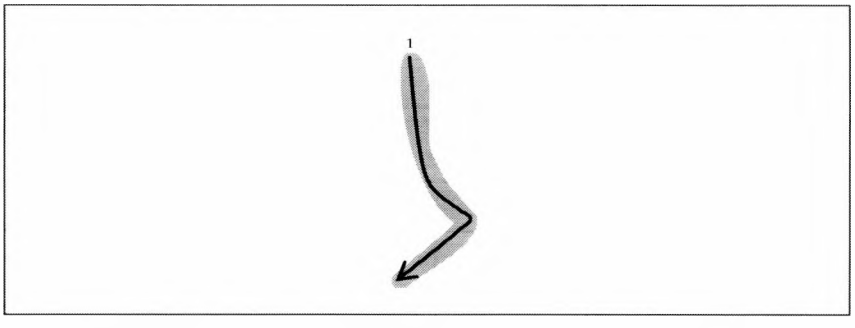


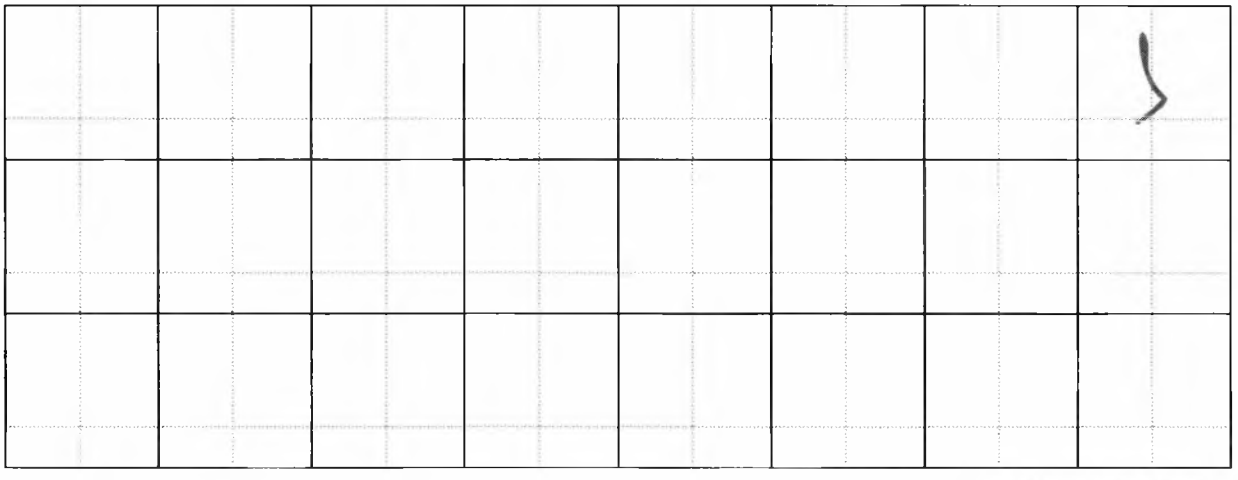
letter form

ל

equivalents

ל ל



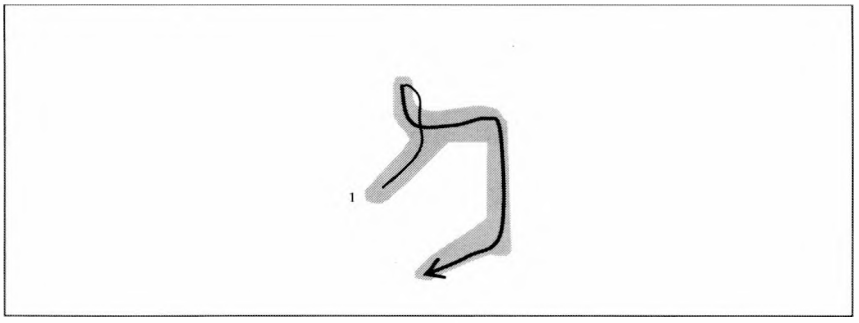


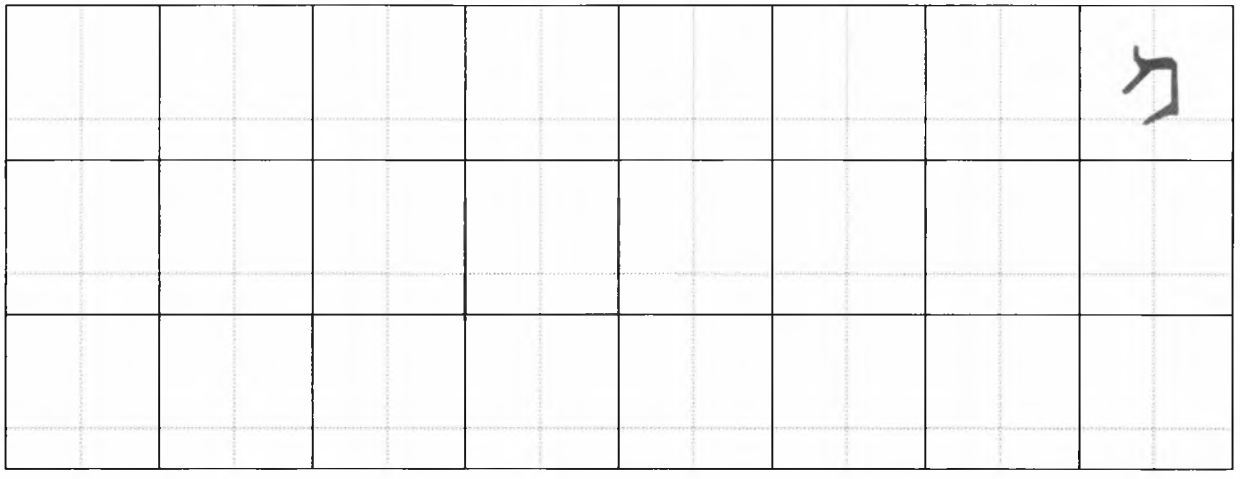
letter form

ר

equivalents

ת מ





letter form

ן

equivalents

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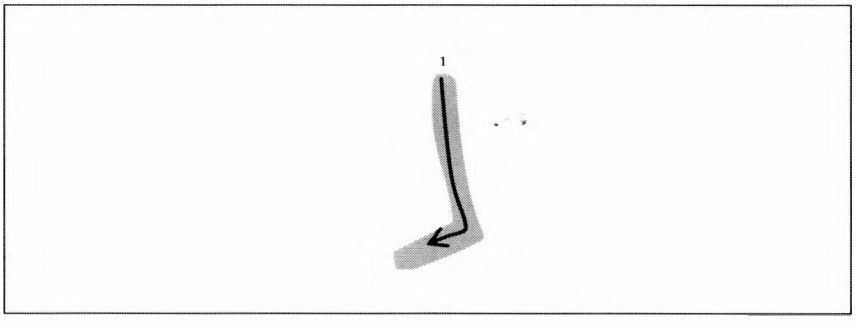

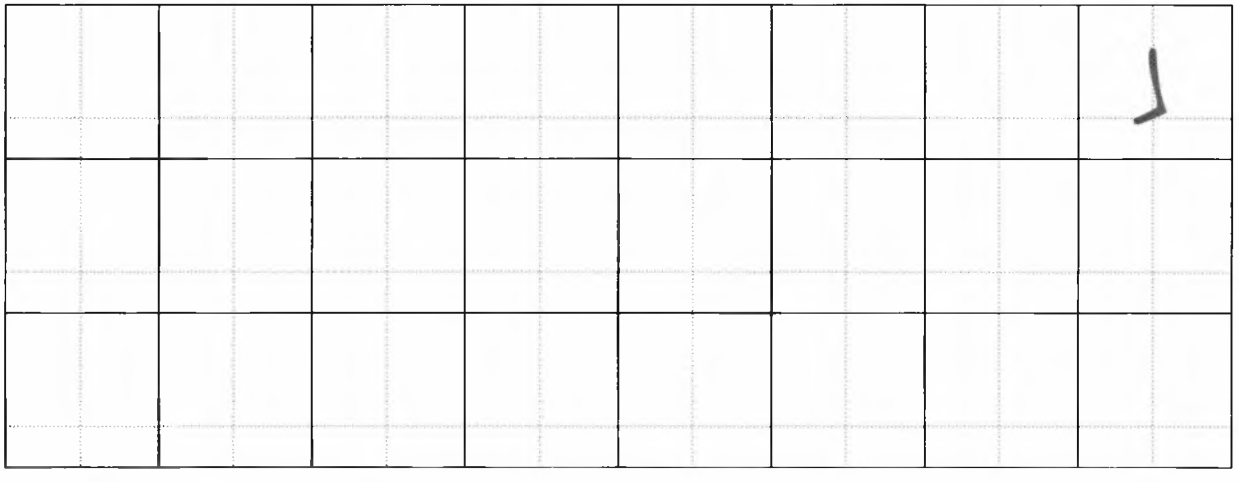

letter form

ס

equivalents

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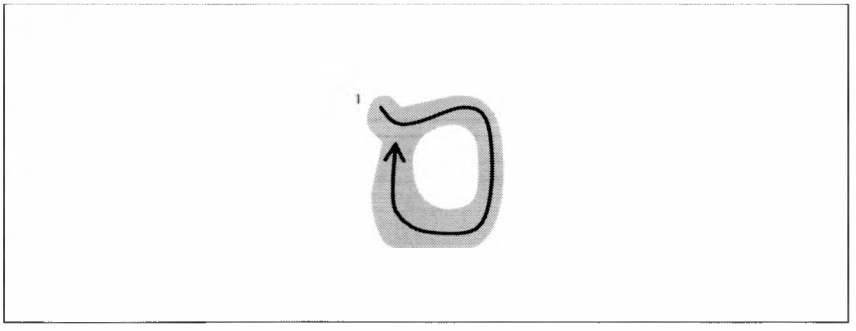
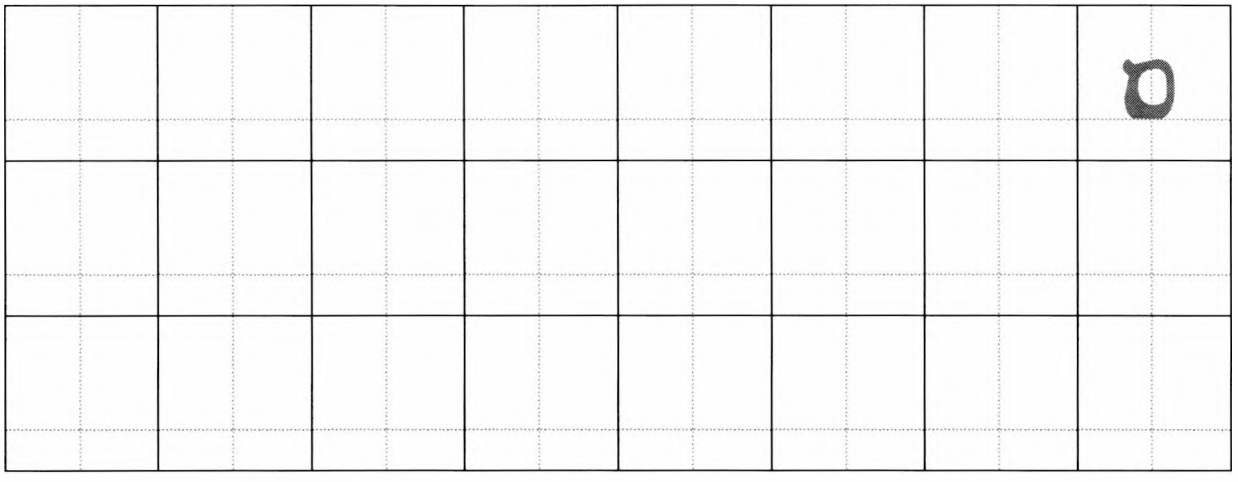


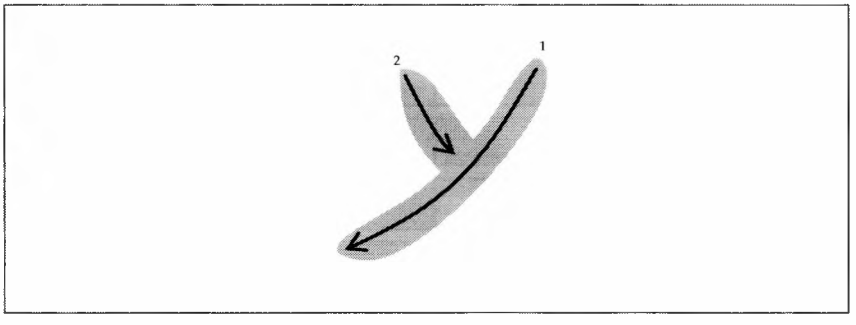


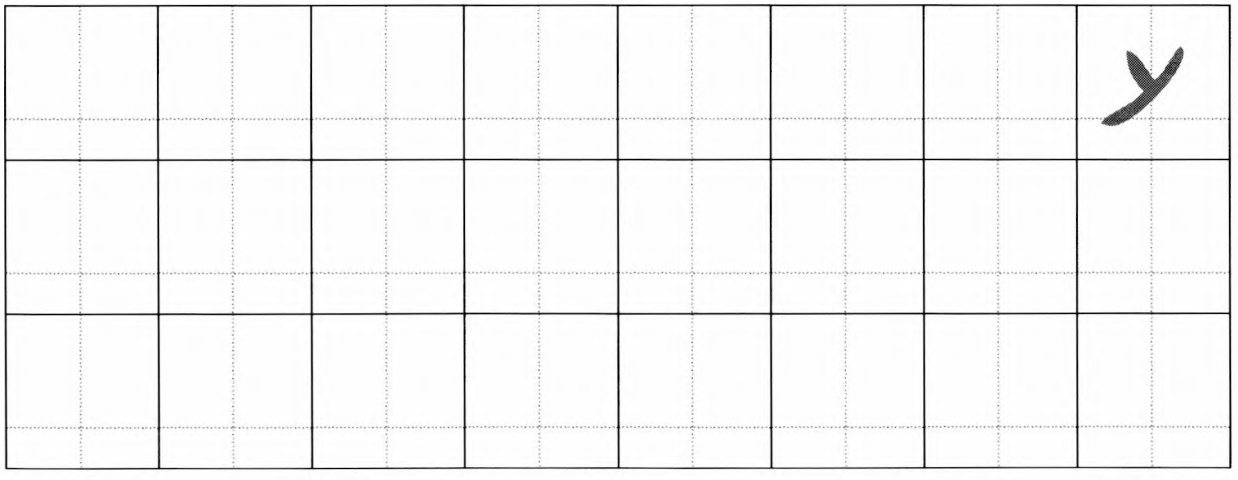
letter form

ע

equivalents

ע ـع



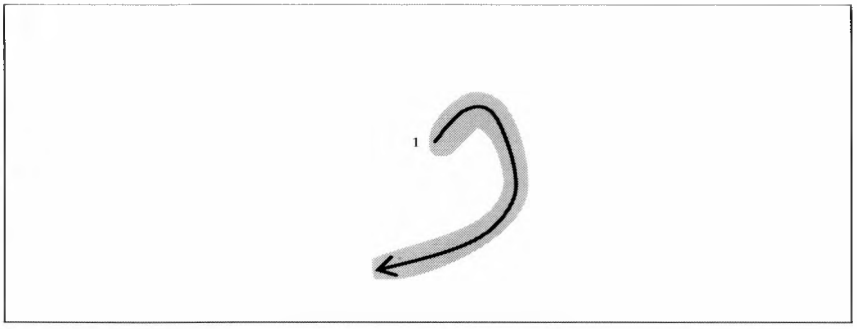


letter form

ד

equivalents

ה פ



							ד

letter form

ר

equivalents

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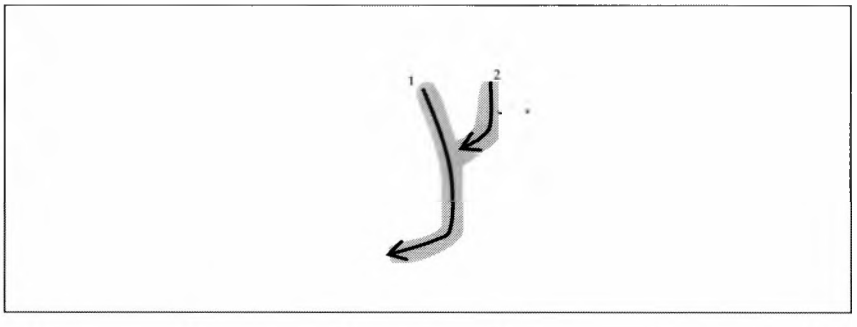


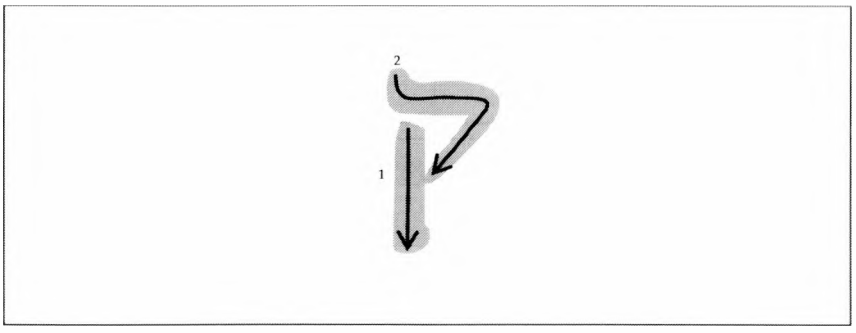
							ר

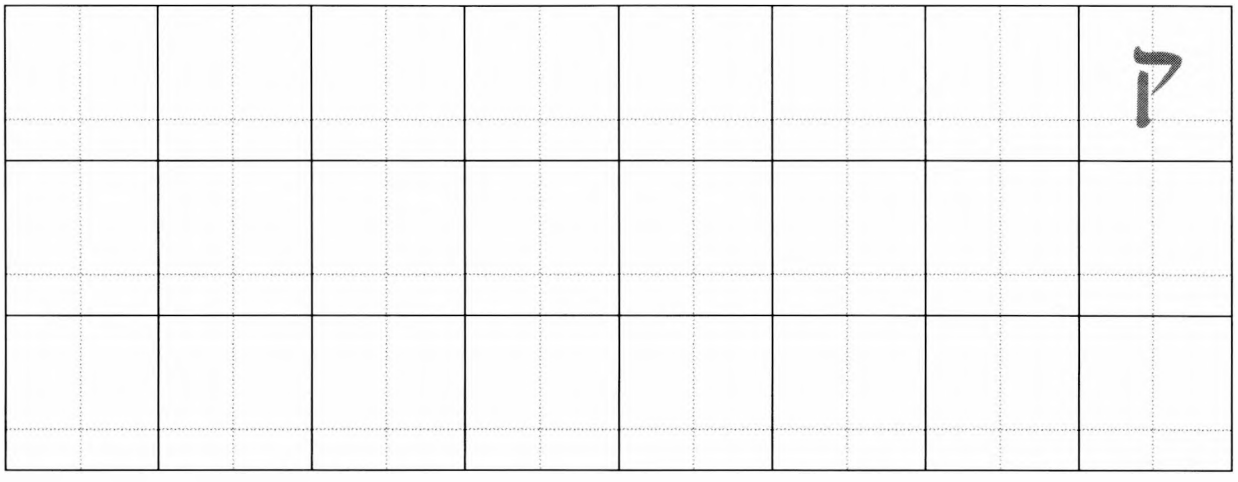
letter form

ק

equivalents

ף ק



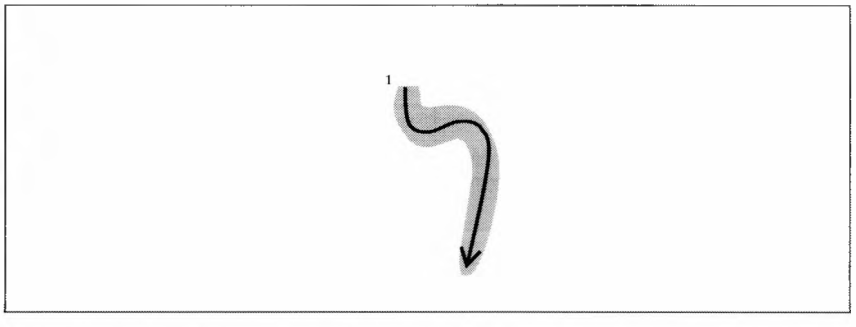


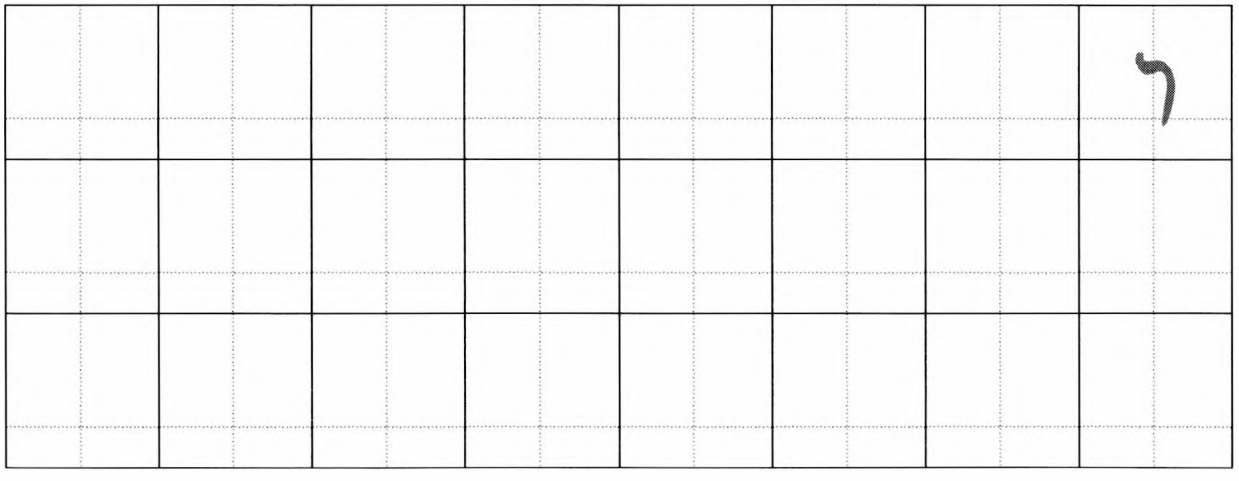
letter form

ר

equivalents

ד ו



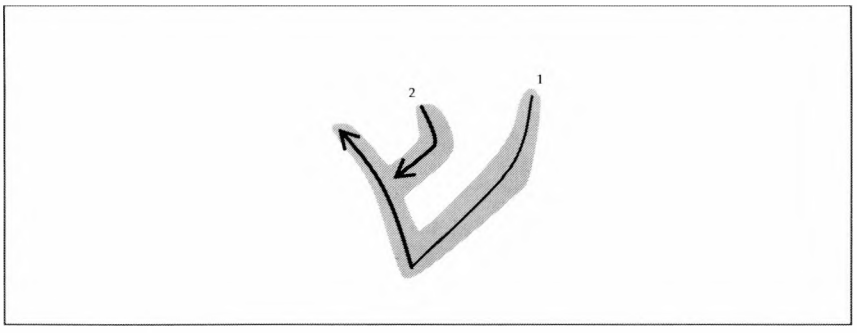


letter form

ש

equivalents

ש ש

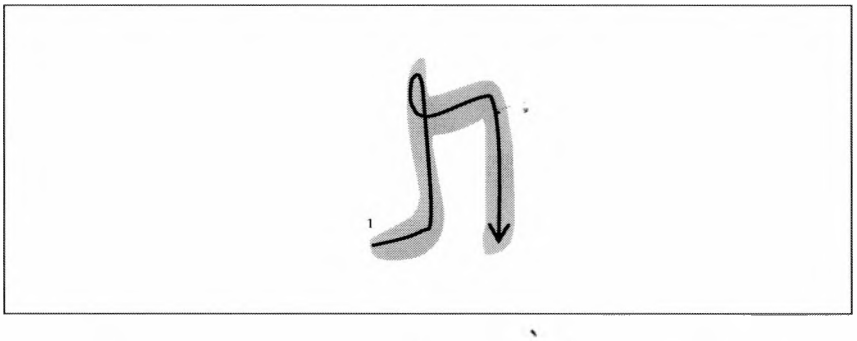


letter form

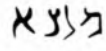
ת

equivalents

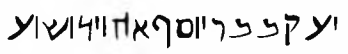
ת א



During the height of the Roman Empire, the square script began to take its familiar shape. The Dead Sea Scrolls and Roman-era inscriptions attest to its development. The same principles introduced for the square script apply to this way of writing Aramaic. Letters are written and read from right to left.

malkā		shmāk	
king	_____	*your name*	_____

Certain letters in this script can look very similar in hurried texts and rough transcriptions. For instance, the letters *waw* and *yudh* may both appear as a vertical line. Also, careful manuscripts include spaces between words, while common inscriptions tend to leave them out. The controversial inscription reproduced below exemplifies both of these features.

ya'akob bar yosep 'aḥuy d-yeshua	
Ya'akov, son of Yoseph, brother of Yeshua	_____

Like the later square and cursive scripts, the Herodian script uses *'alaph*, *he*, *waw* and *yudh* as *matres lectionis*. However, no system of vowel pointing or formalized punctuation yet existed.

The Hebrew Cursive Script

letter form

ܟ

equivalents

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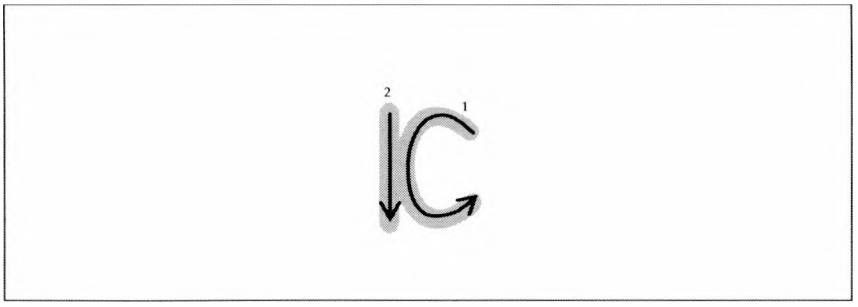
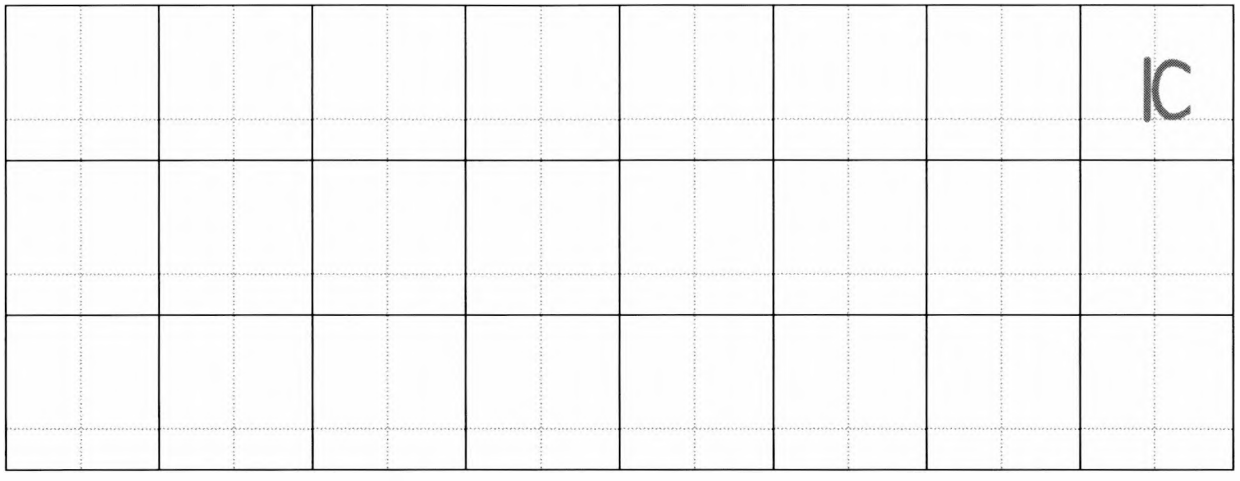


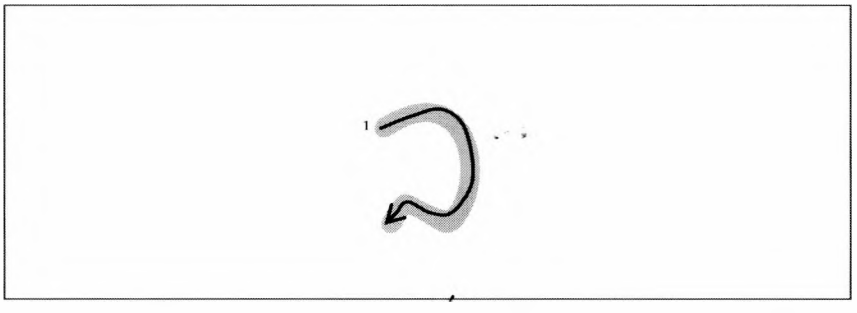


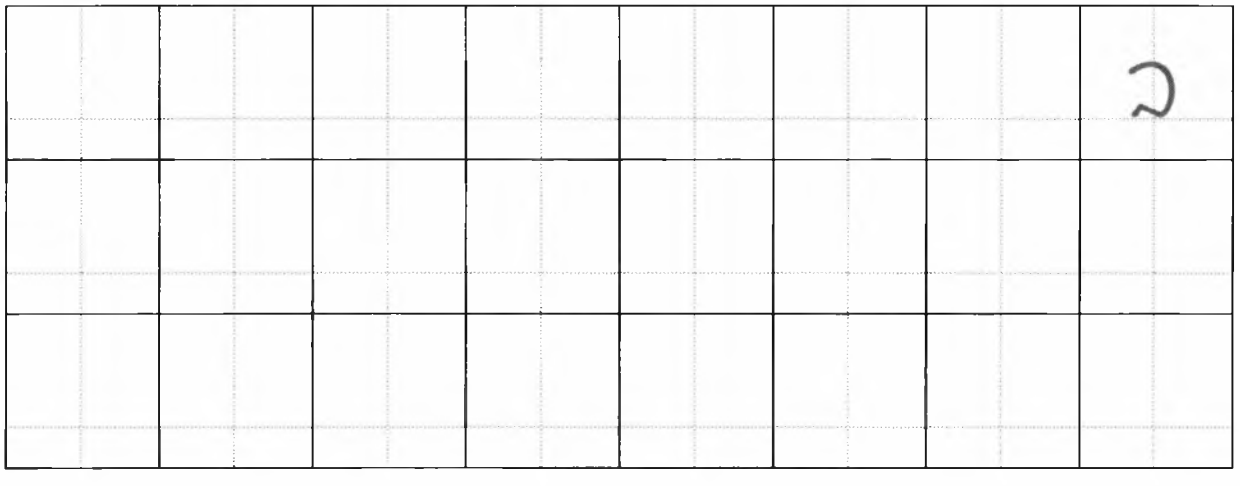
letter form

ܒ

equivalents

ܒ ܒ





letter form

ר

equivalents

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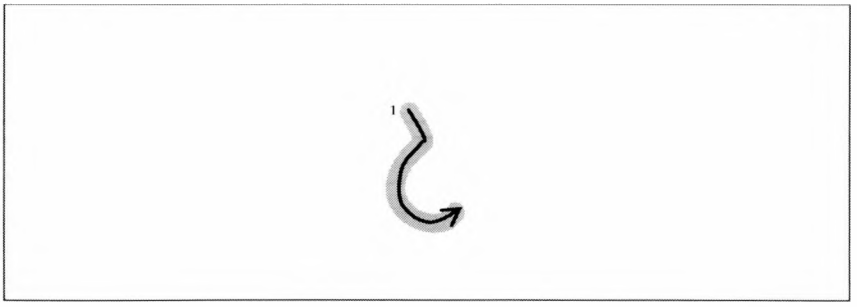

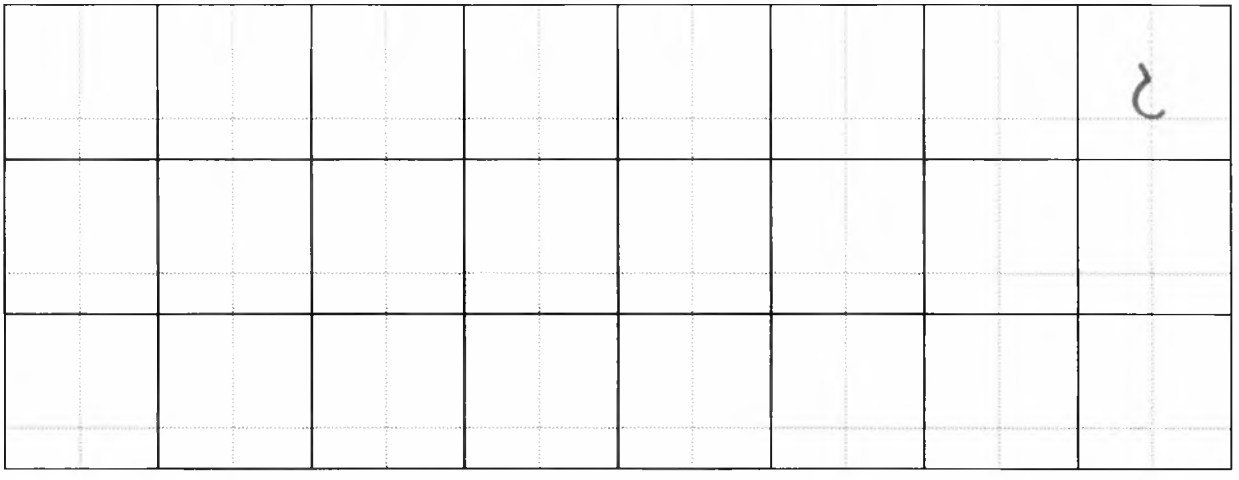

letter form

ז

equivalents

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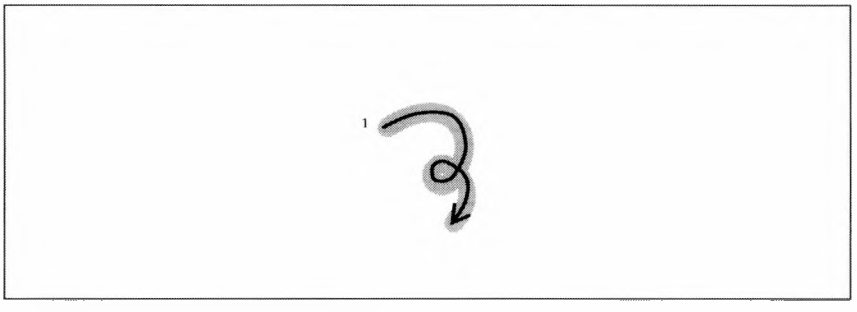

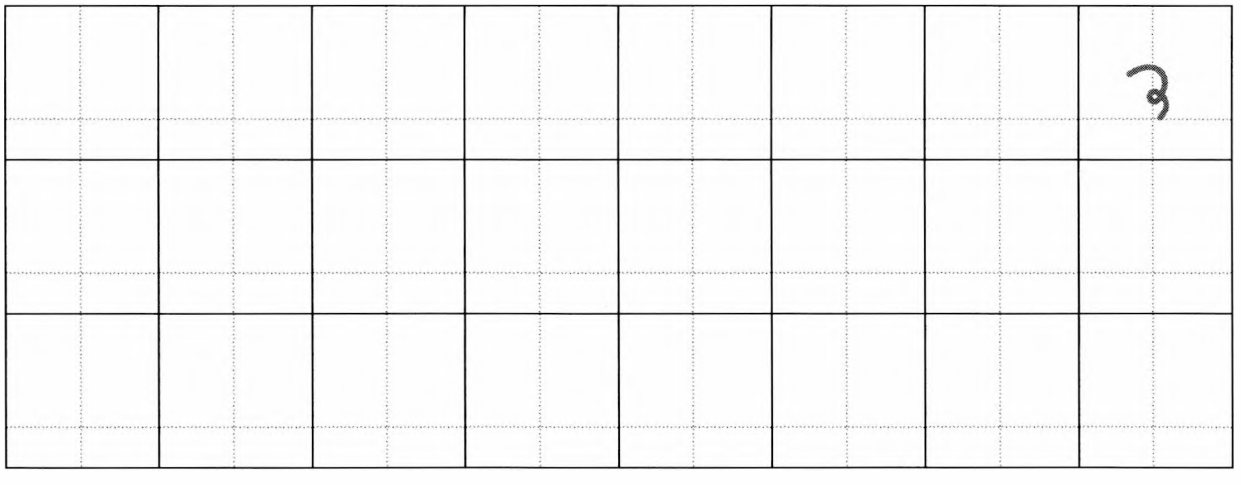

letter form

ܘ

equivalents

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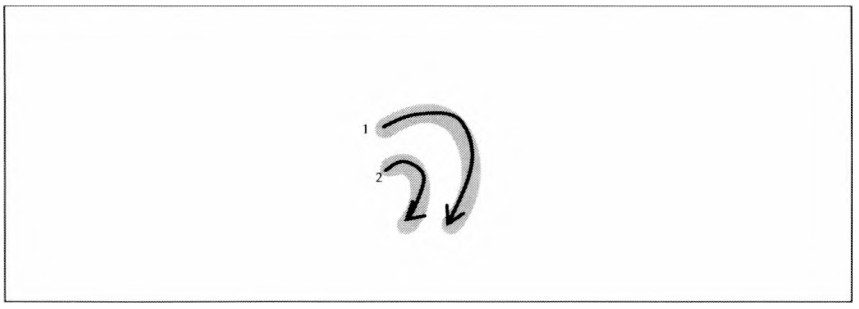

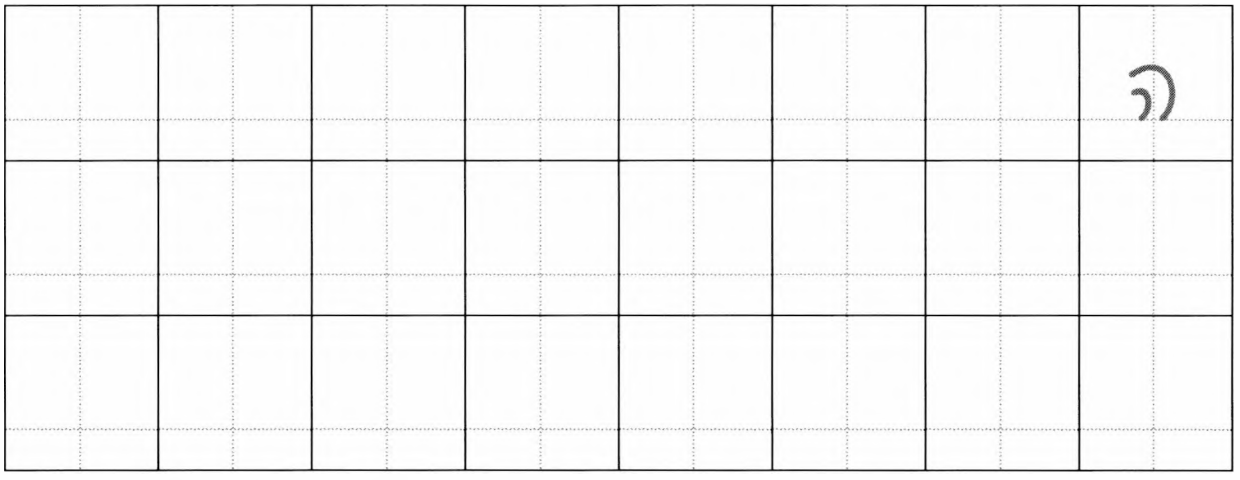

letter form

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equivalents

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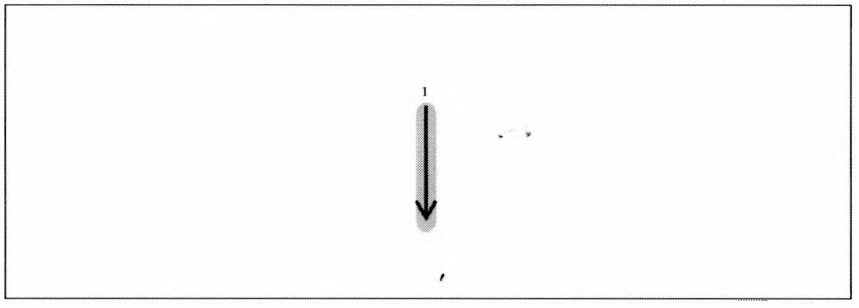
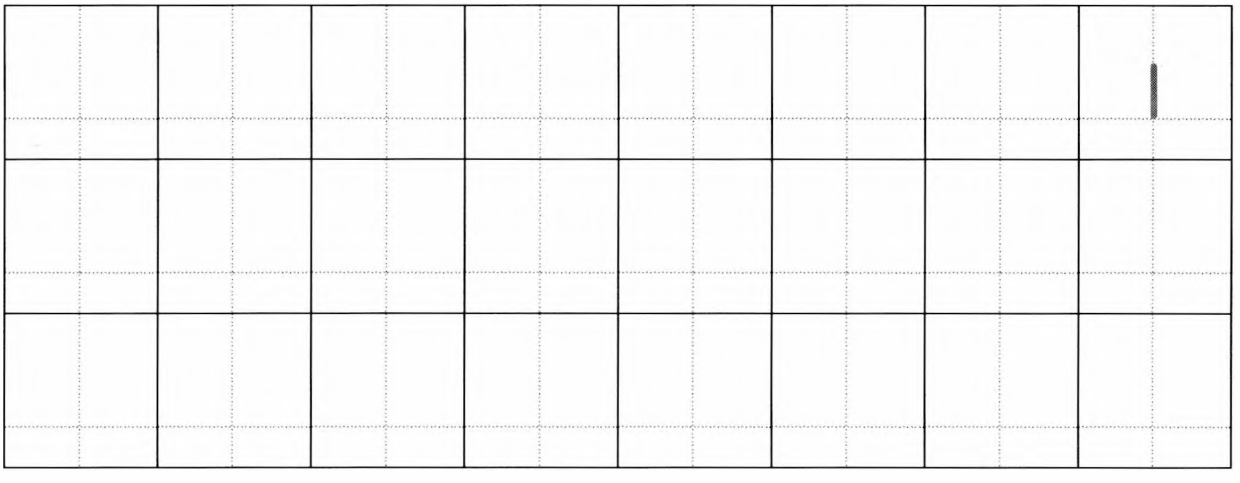


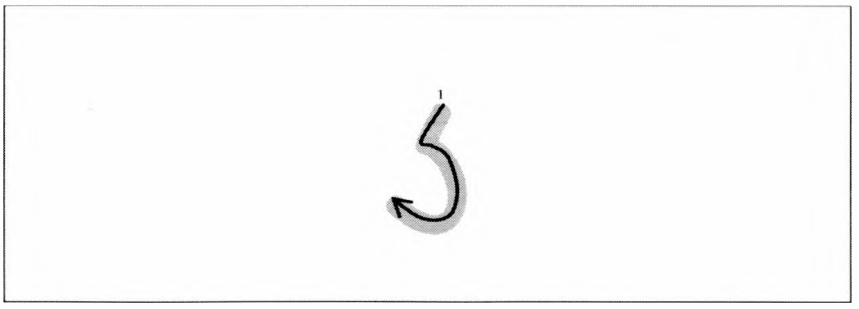


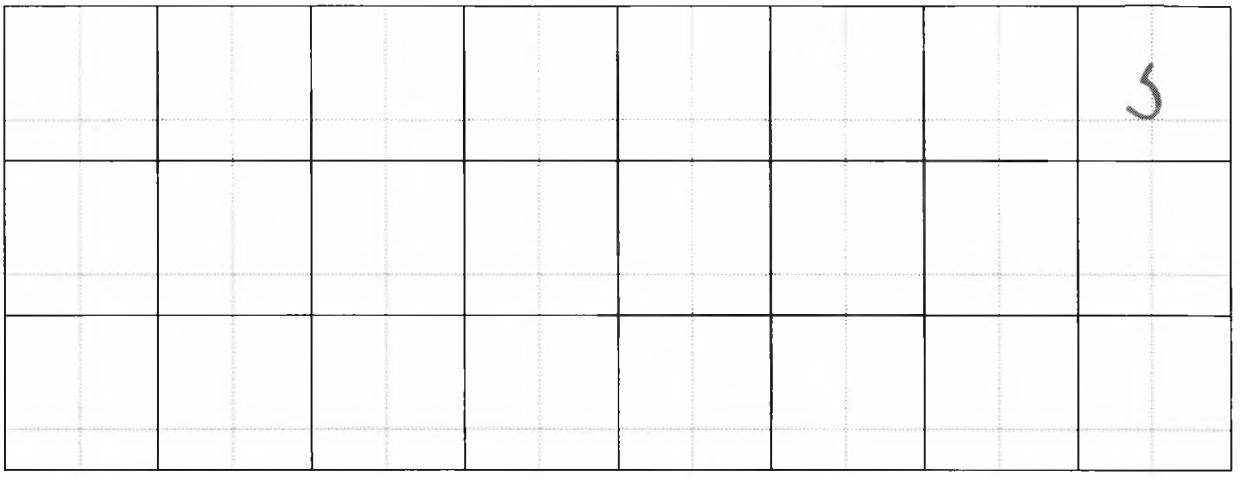
letter form

ל

equivalents

ל ל





letter form

ם

equivalents

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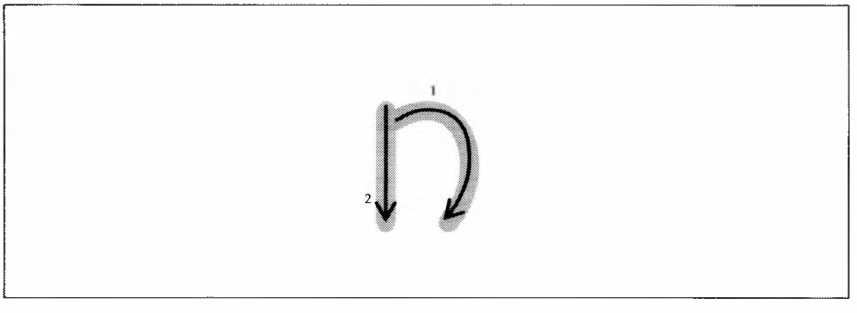

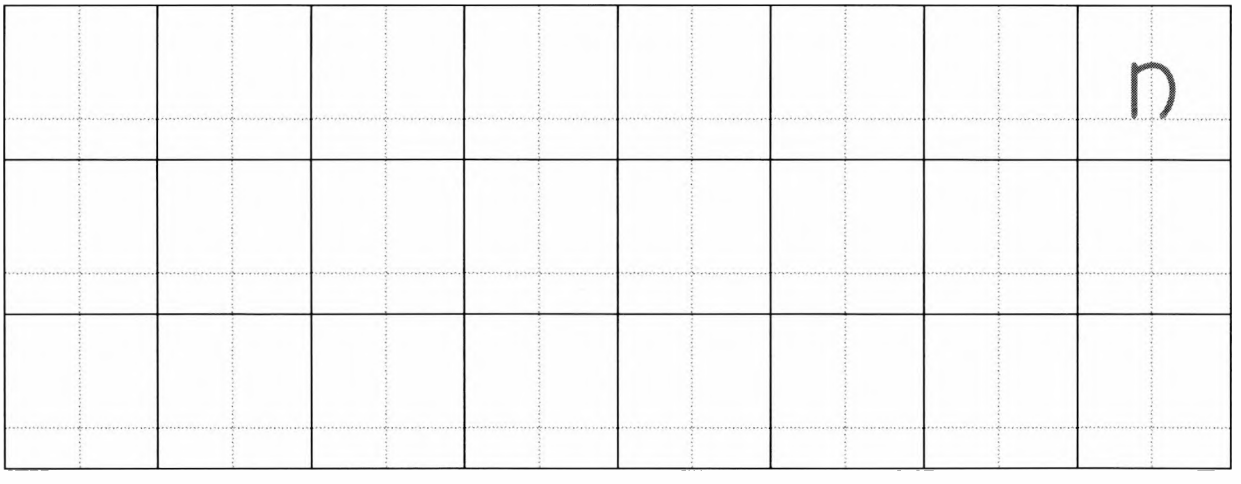

letter form

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equivalents

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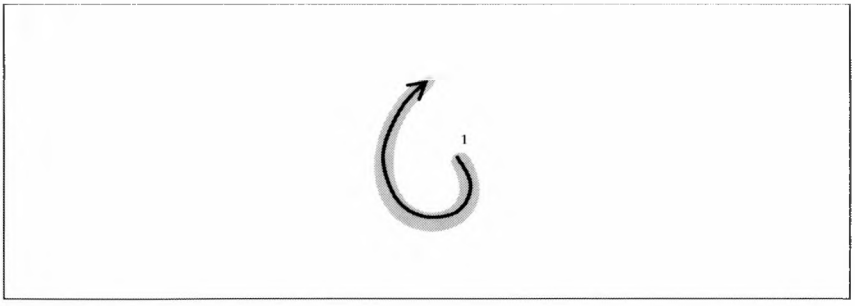
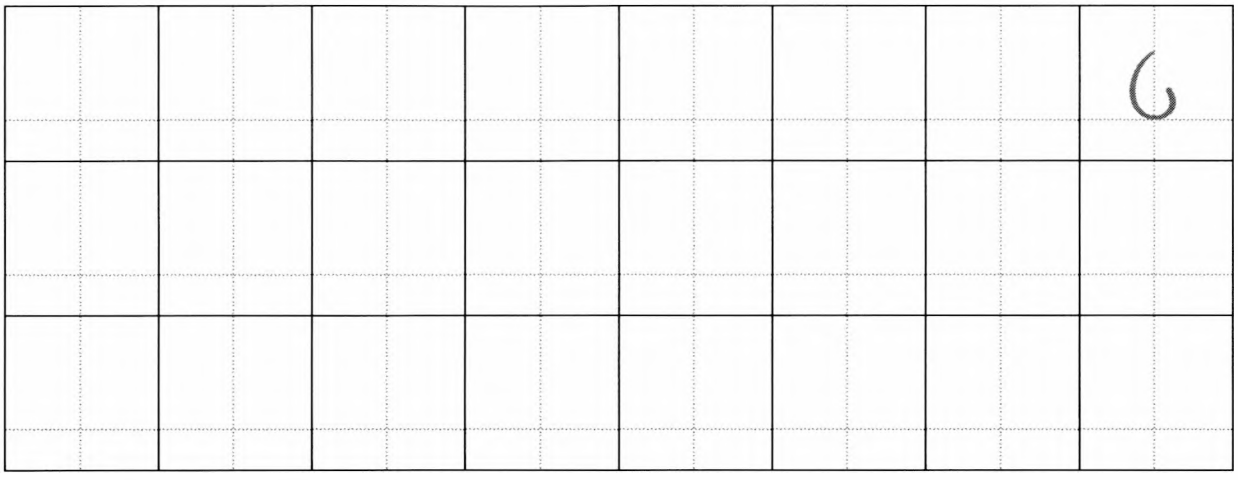


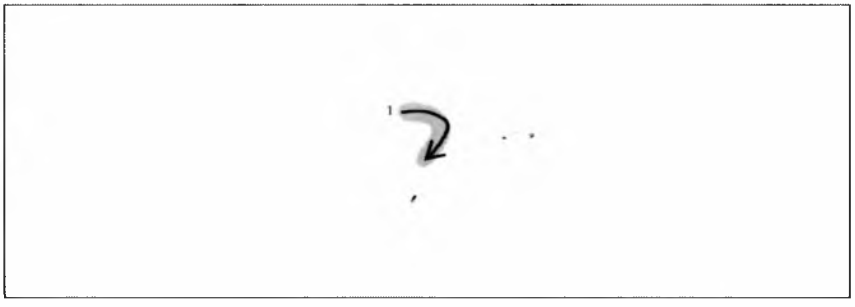


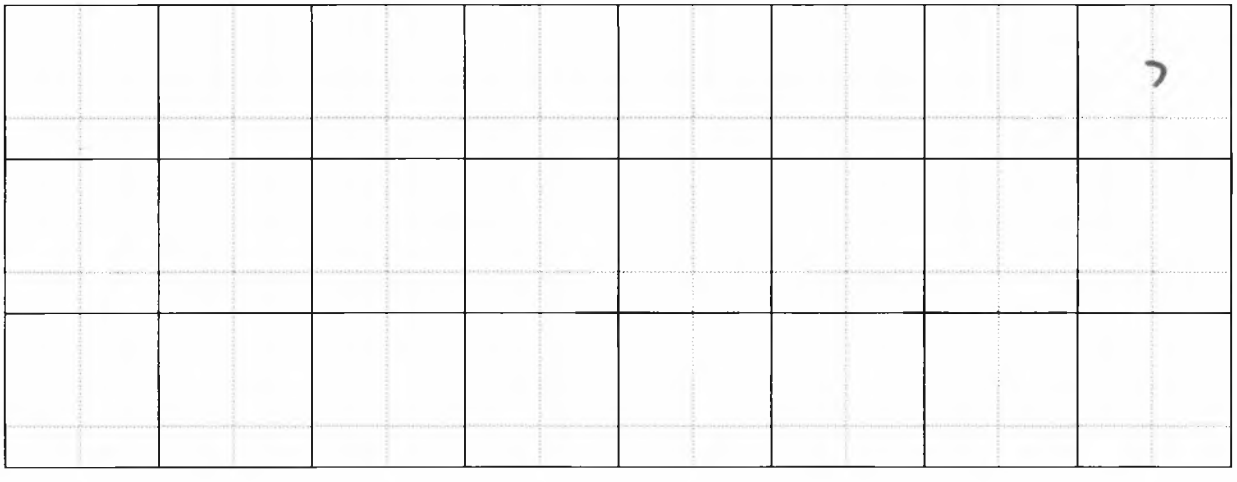
letter form

ܐ

equivalents

ܐ ,



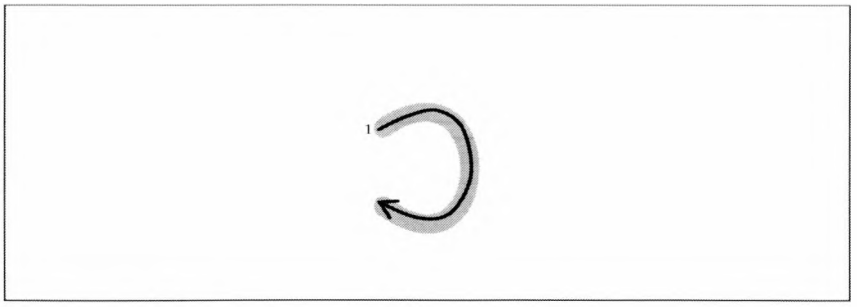


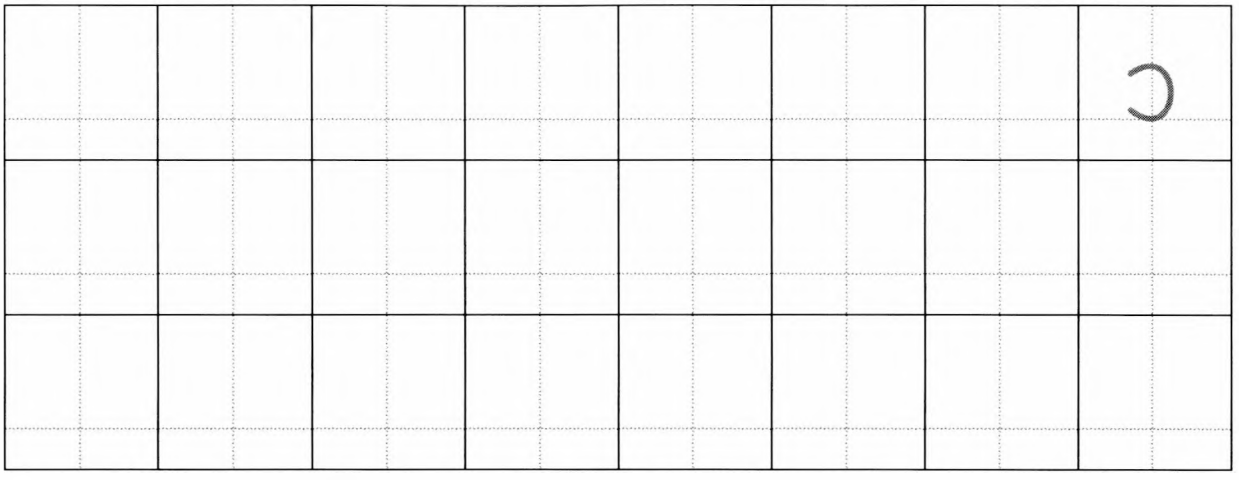
letter form

כ

equivalents

כ ך



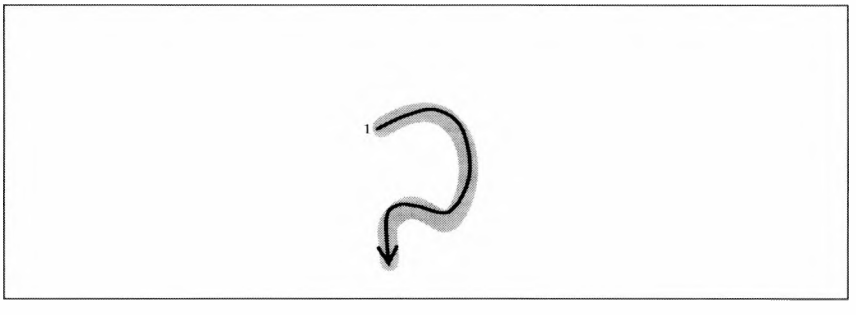


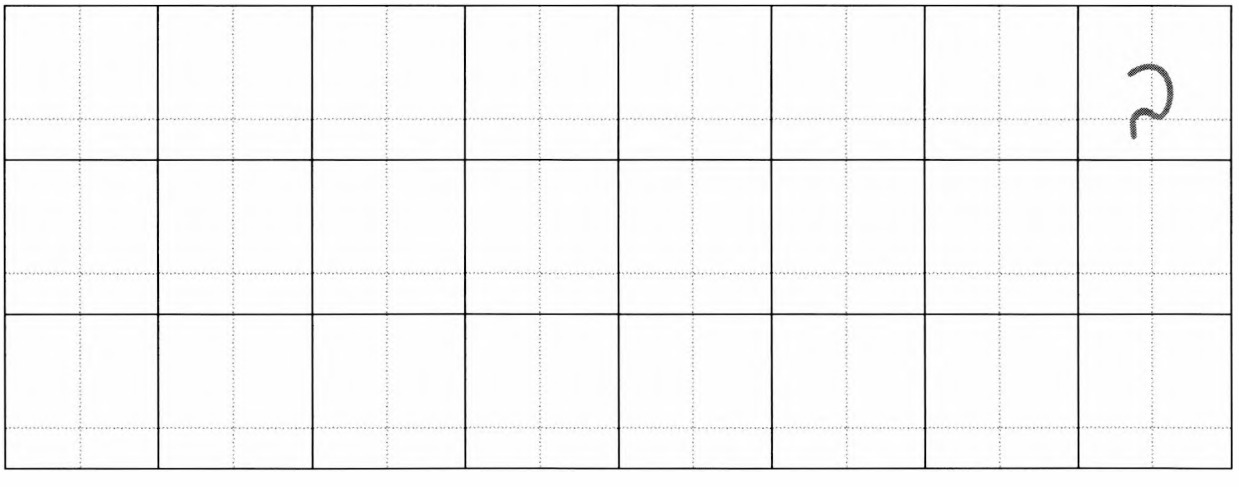
letter form

ך

equivalents

ך כ



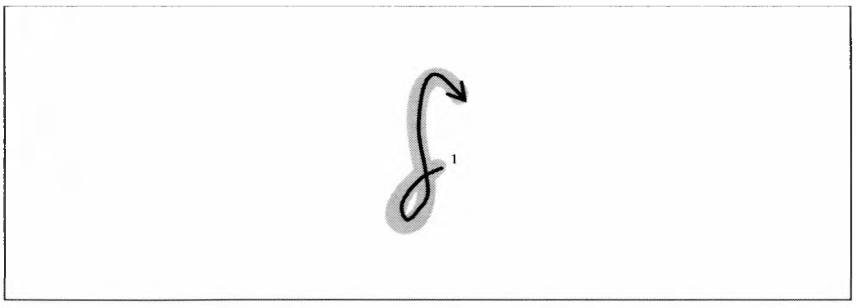


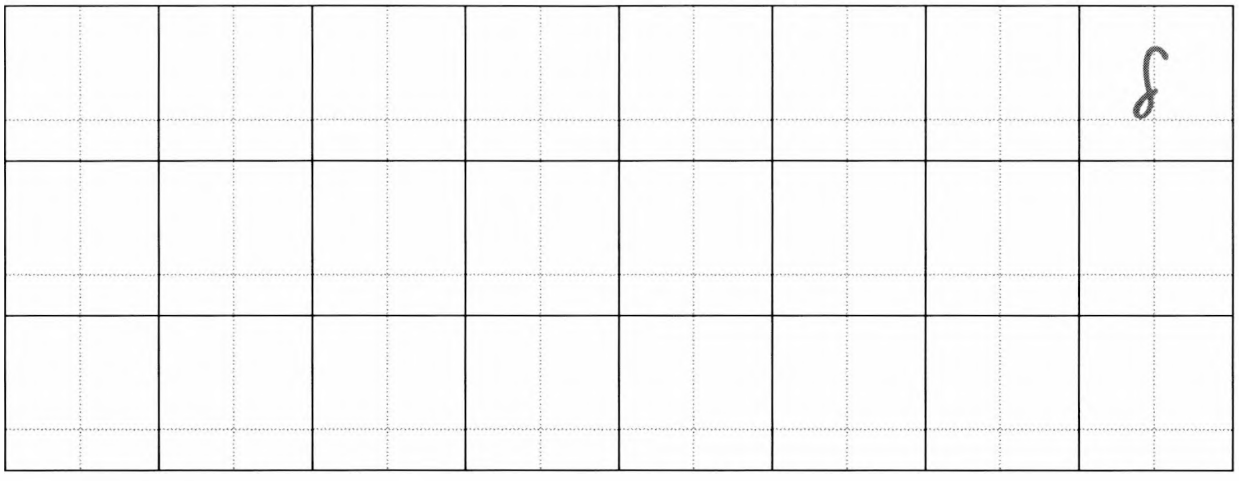
letter form

ʃ

equivalents

ל ל



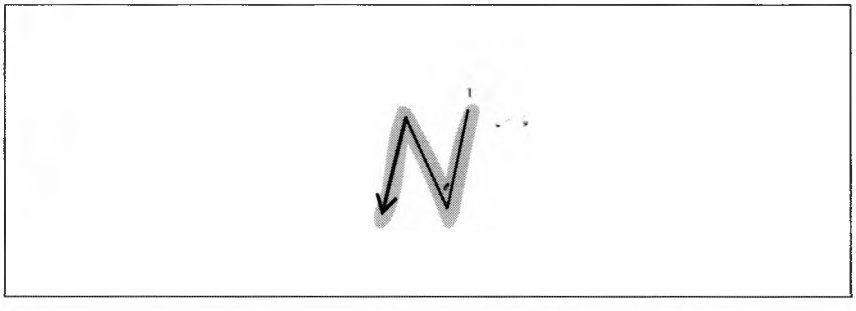


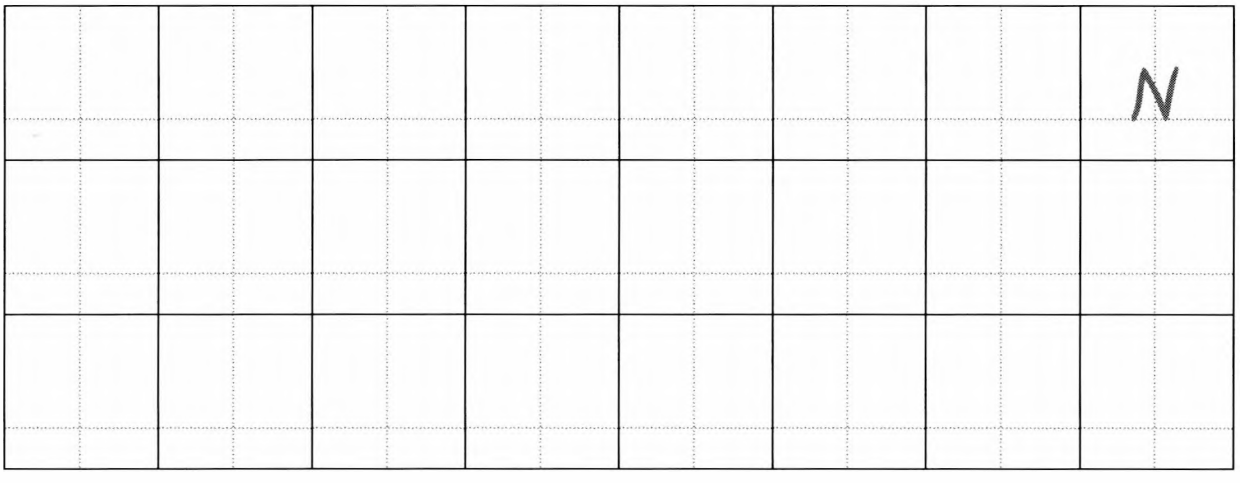
letter form

ɴ

equivalents

מ מ



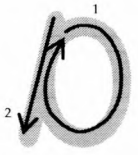


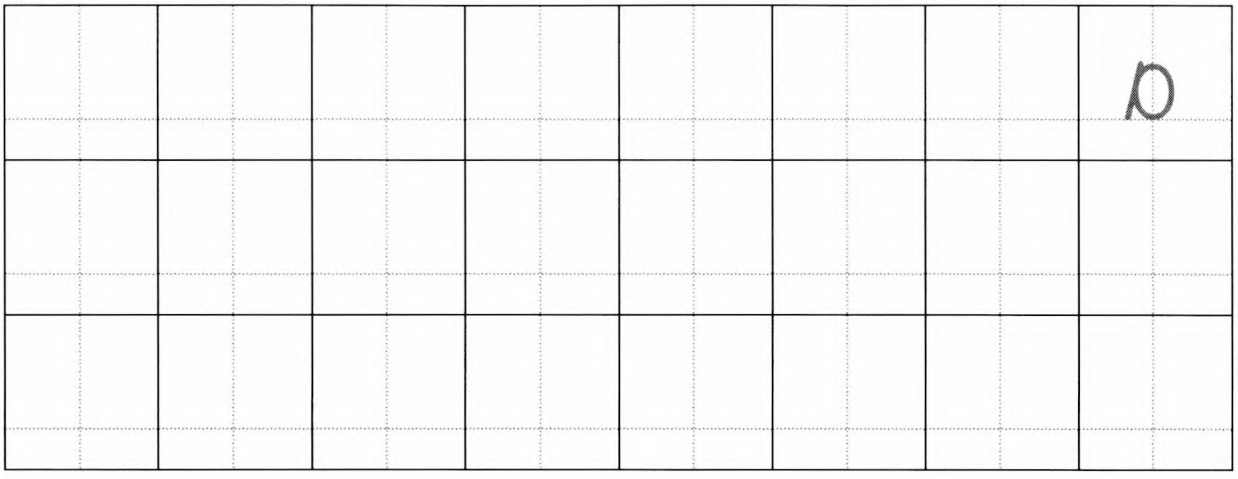
letter form

ם

equivalents

ם מ





letter form

ן

equivalents

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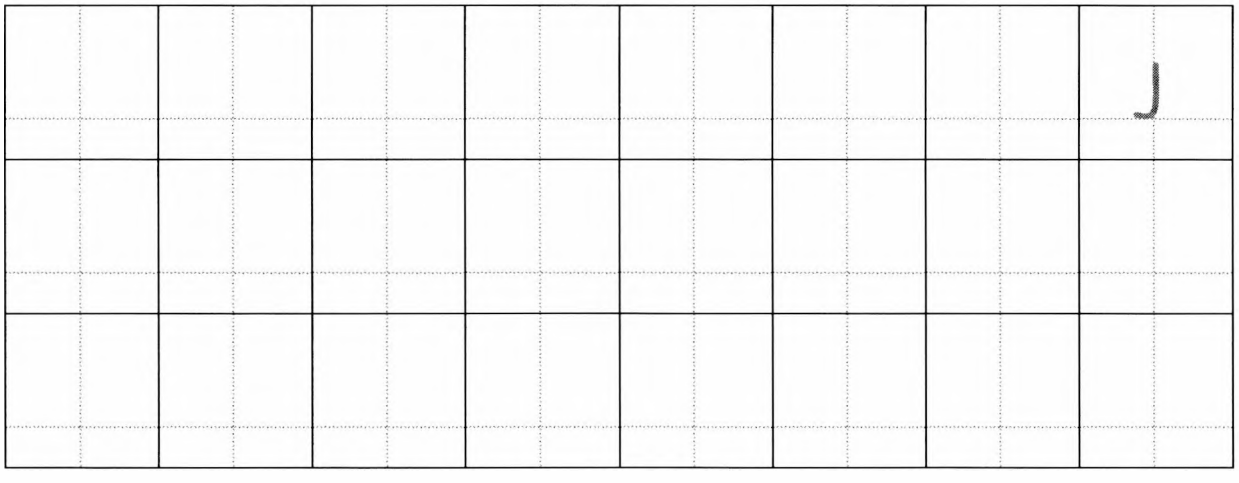
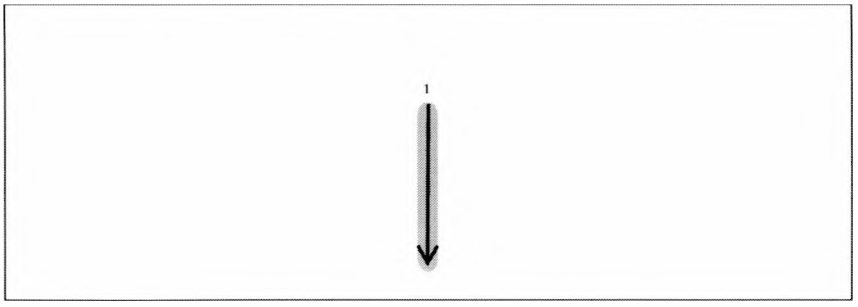


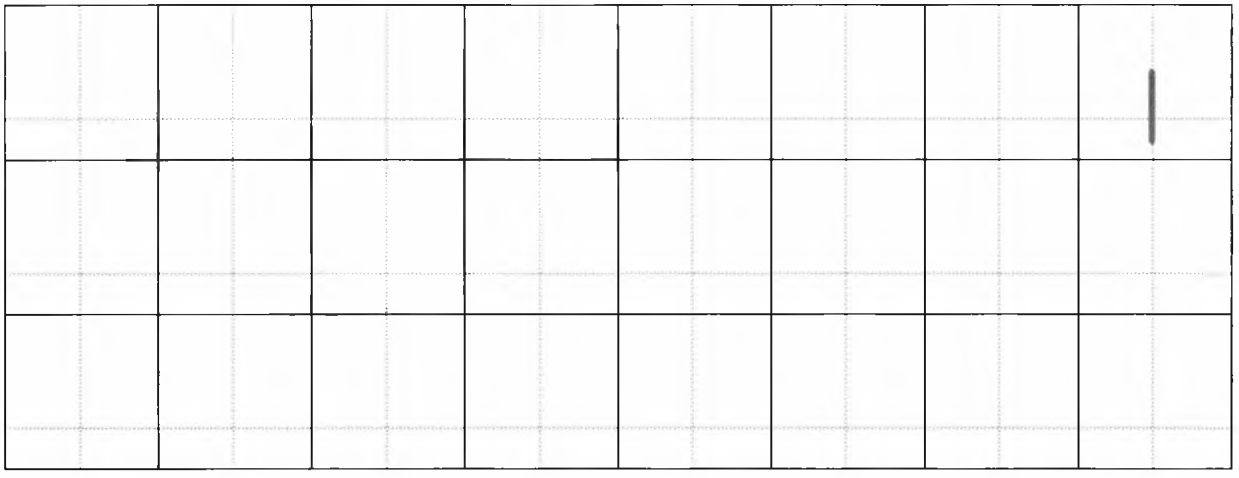
letter form

ו

equivalents

ו



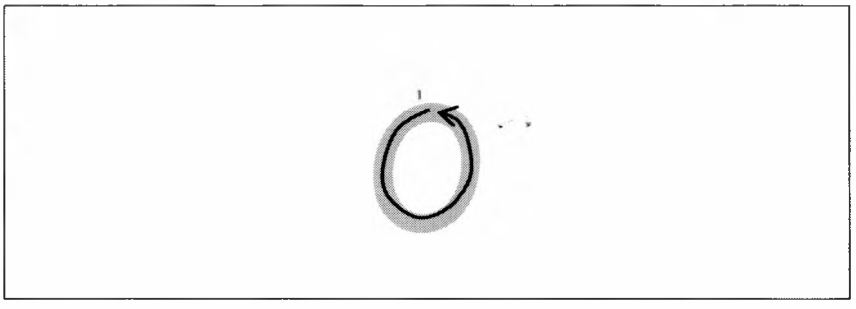


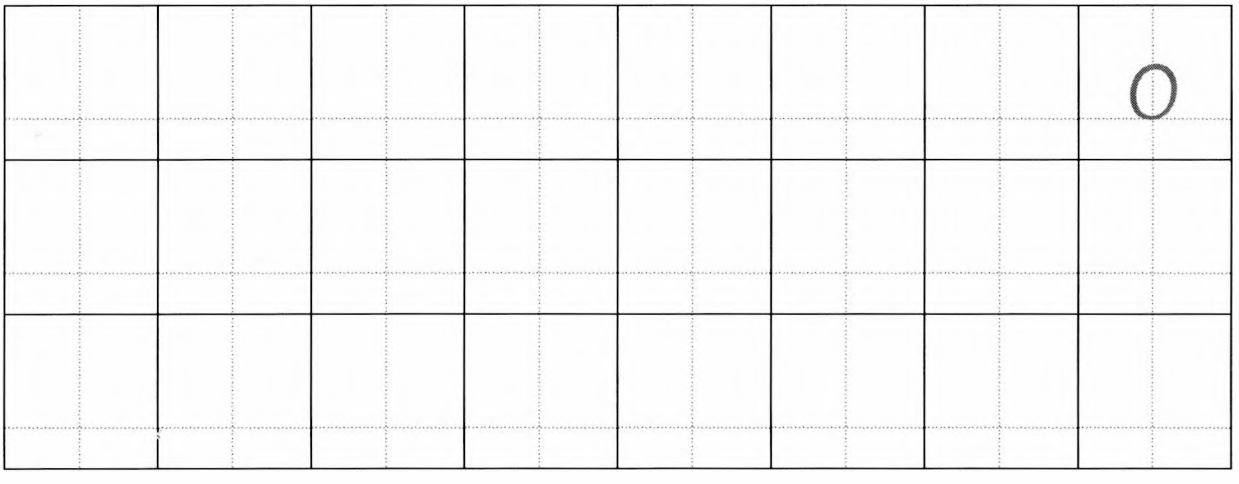
letter form

ס

equivalents

ס ם



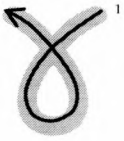


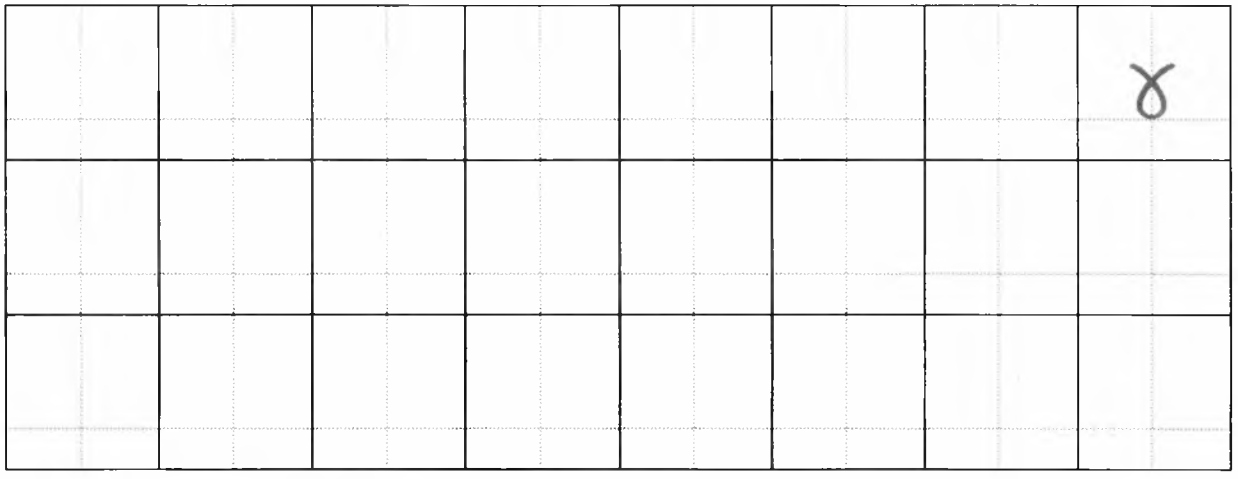
letter form

ע

equivalents

ע ـع



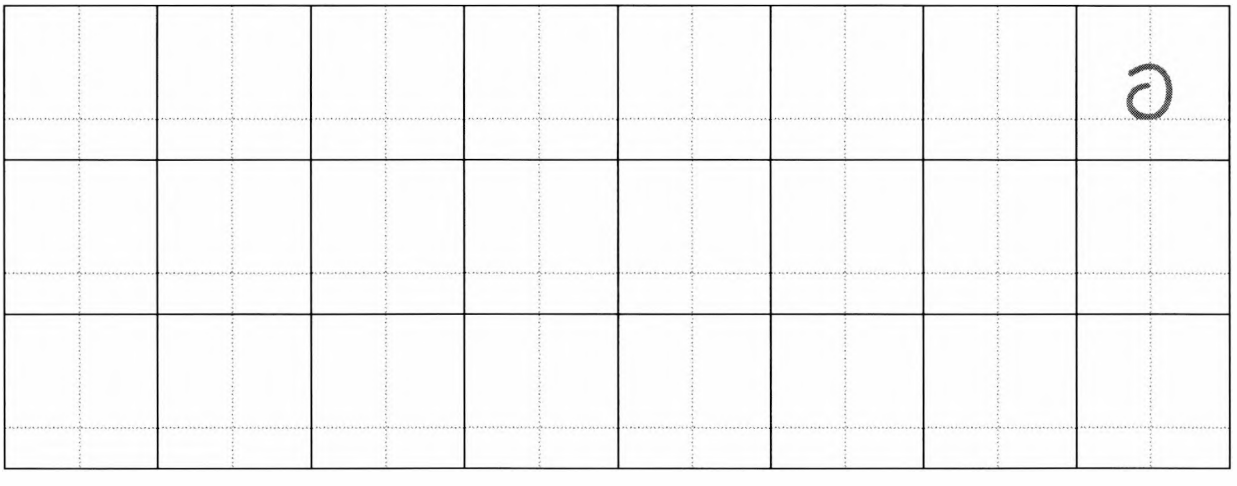


letter form

ס

equivalents

ס ـס

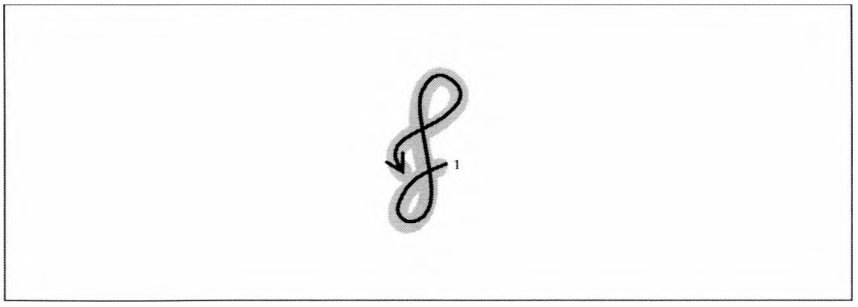


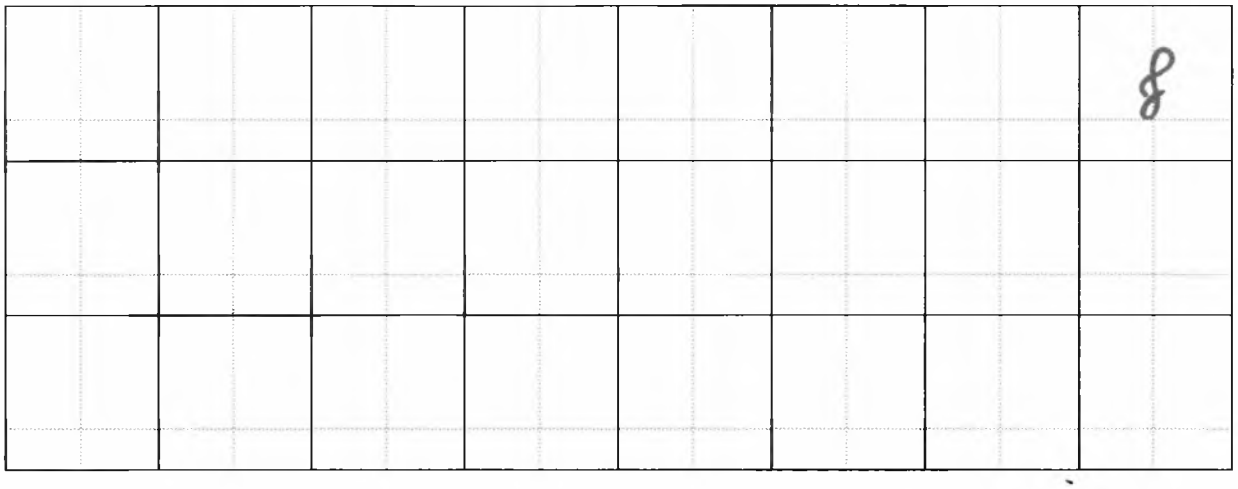
letter form

ܐ

equivalents

ܗ ܐ



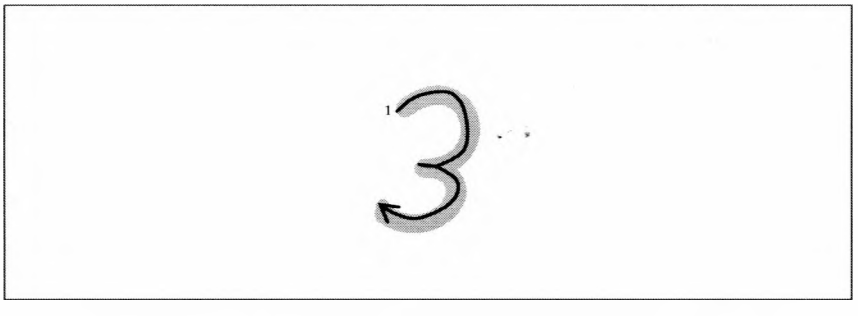


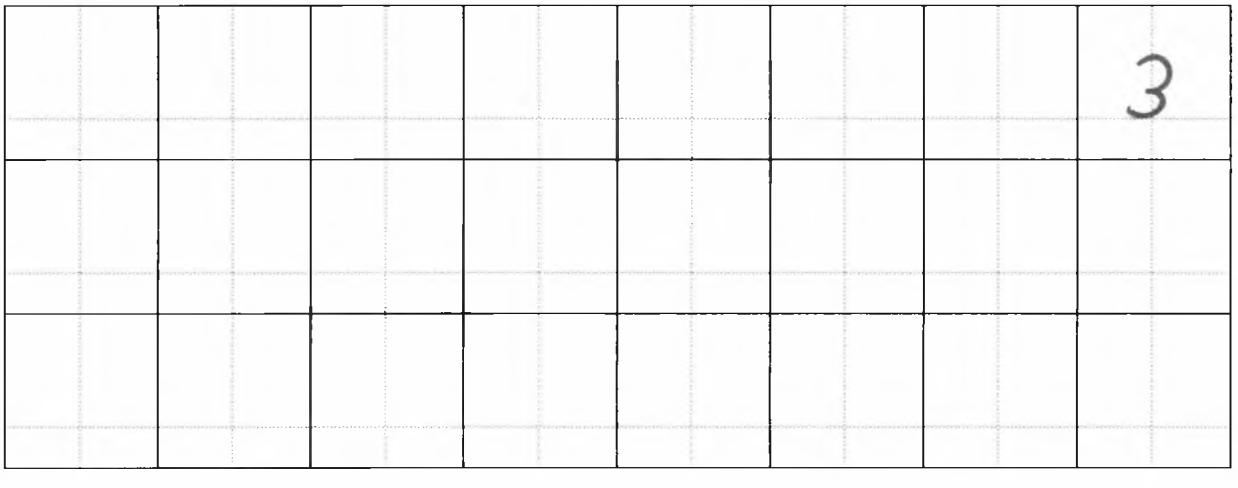
letter form

ܥ

equivalents

ܥ ܥ



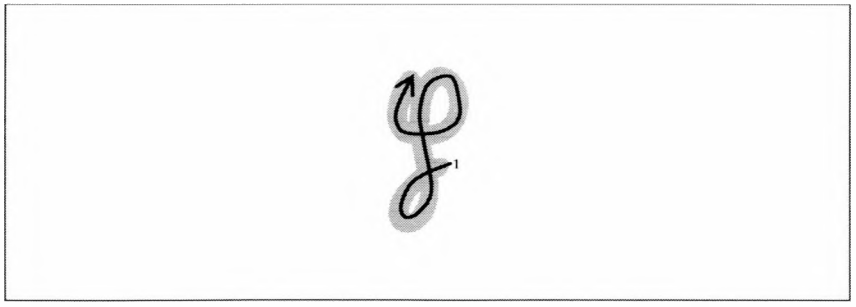


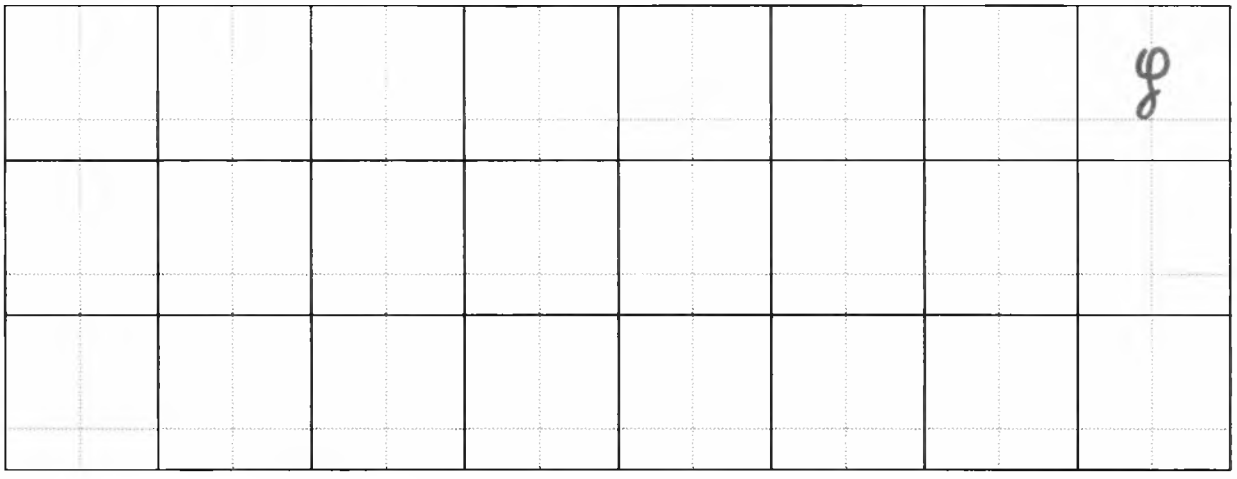
letter form

ף

equivalents

ף ـף



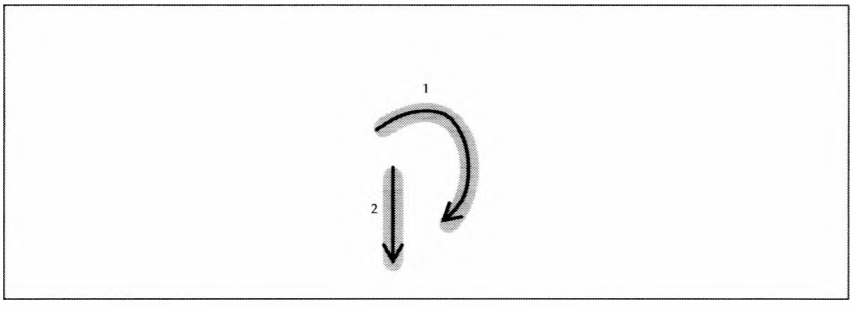


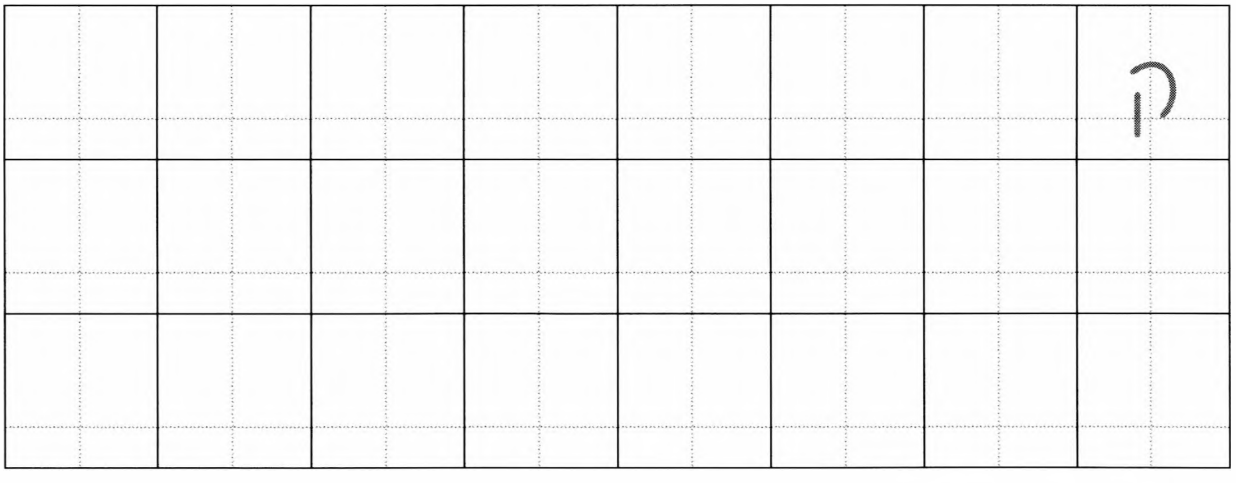
letter form

ק

equivalents

ק ـק



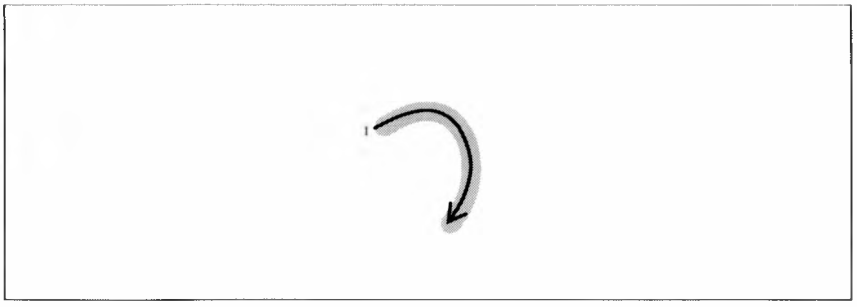


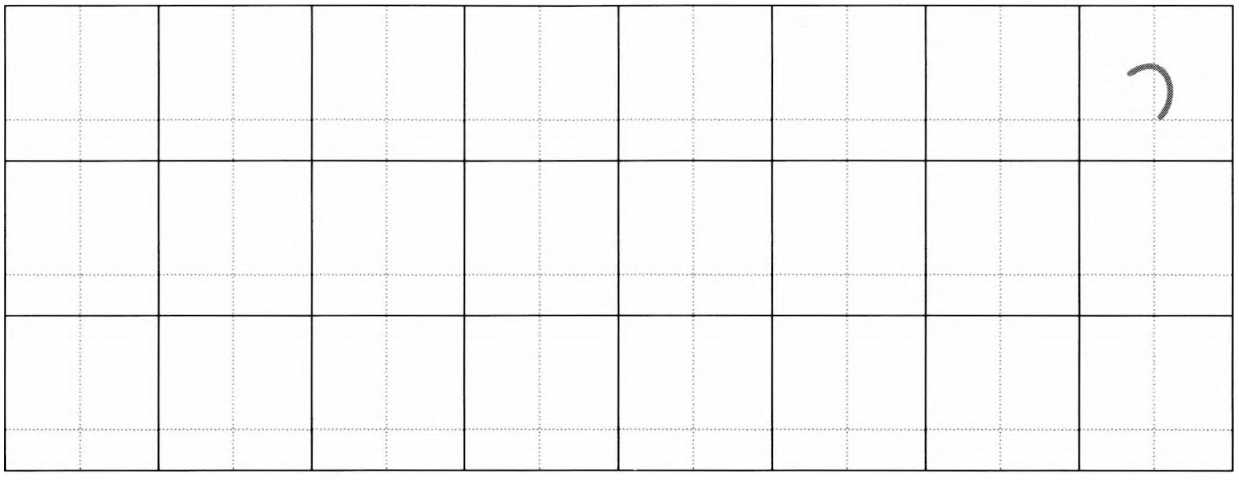
letter form

ר

equivalents

ר י



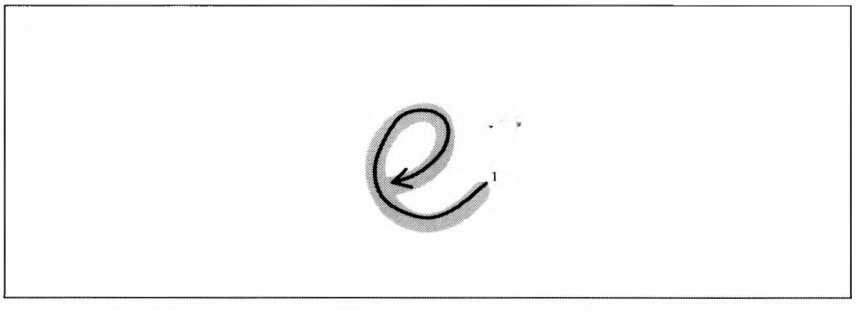


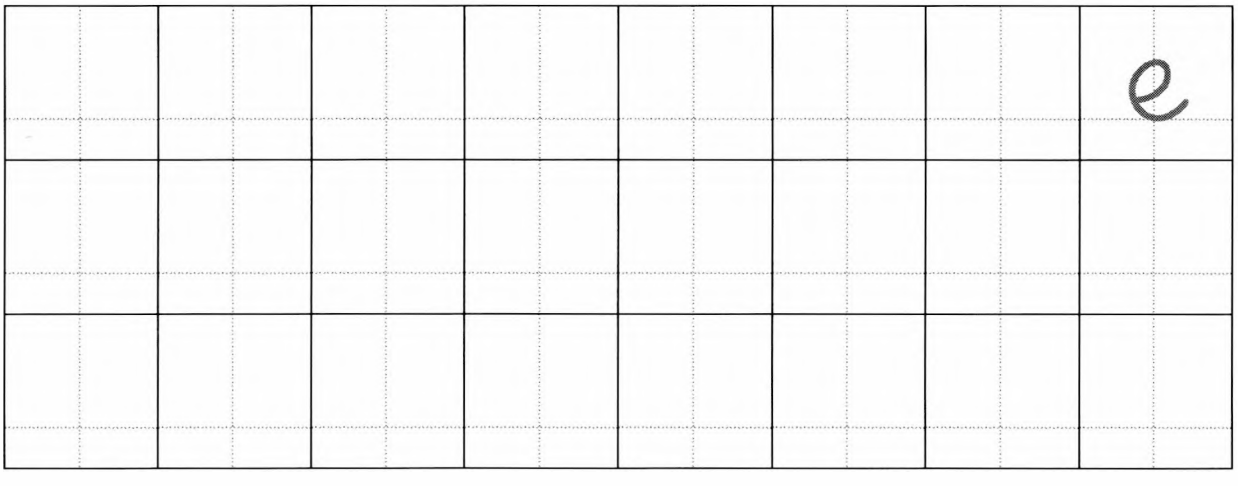
letter form

ה

equivalents

ה ה



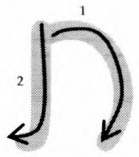


letter form

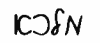
ת

equivalents

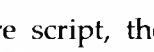
ת ת



The modern Hebrew cursive script may be used to write Jewish Aramaic. The rules presented previously for the square script also apply to this script. The letters are written and read from right to left.

malkā		nehre	
king	_____	*rivers*	_____

Like the standard square script, the Hebrew cursive script has unique final forms of *kaph, lammedh, mim, nun, pe* and *ṣadhe*. These final forms are included in the practice sheets.

ʿolām		qrīwin	
world	_____	*soon*	_____

This script includes spaces between words and Western-style punctuation marks flipped left-to-right, including the comma and question mark.

_____

yalunke mād ʾamrittu la gōzi b-khabrokh! [†]
Children, whatever you tell them, do not listen to your words!

Notice that this cursive script also uses *matres lectionis*. However, since this is not a carefully printed script, it avoids vowel pointing and only occasionally includes consonant diacritics.

[†] Yona Sabar, *A Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dictionary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 54.

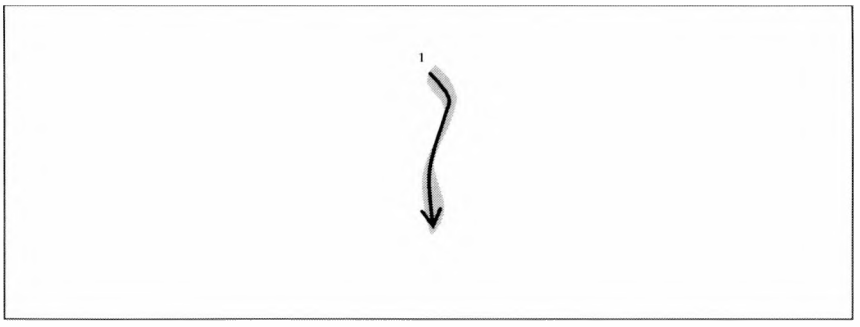
The Western Serto Script

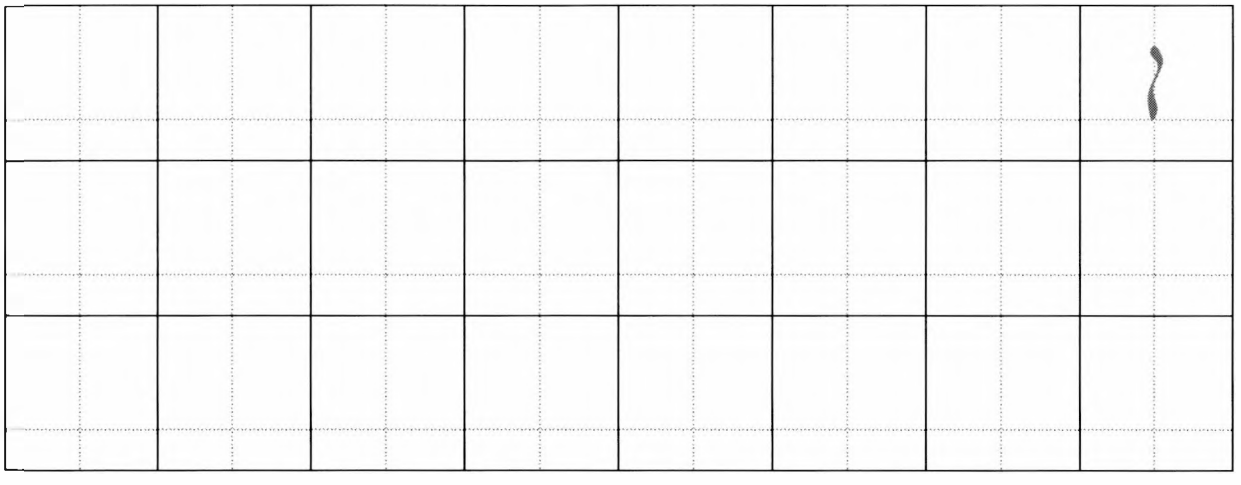
letter form

ז

equivalents

א ר



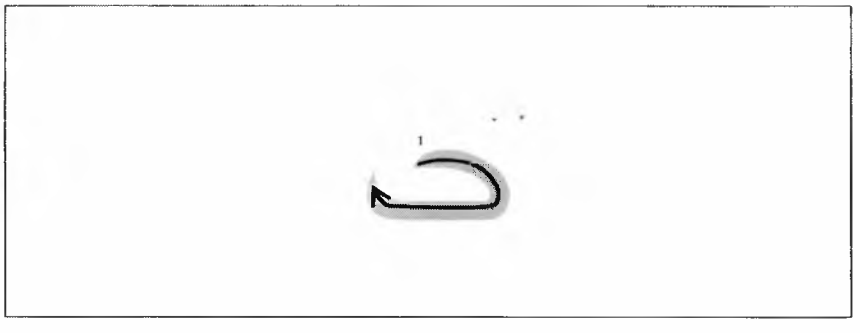


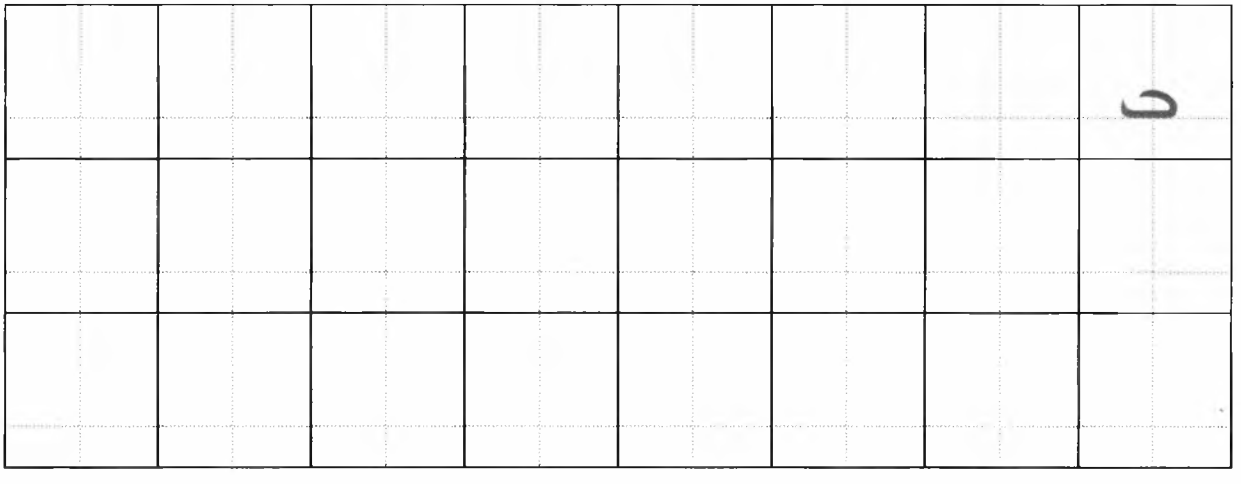
letter form

ט

equivalents

ב ט





letter form

equivalents

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letter form

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equivalents

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letter form

ס

equivalents

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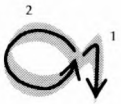

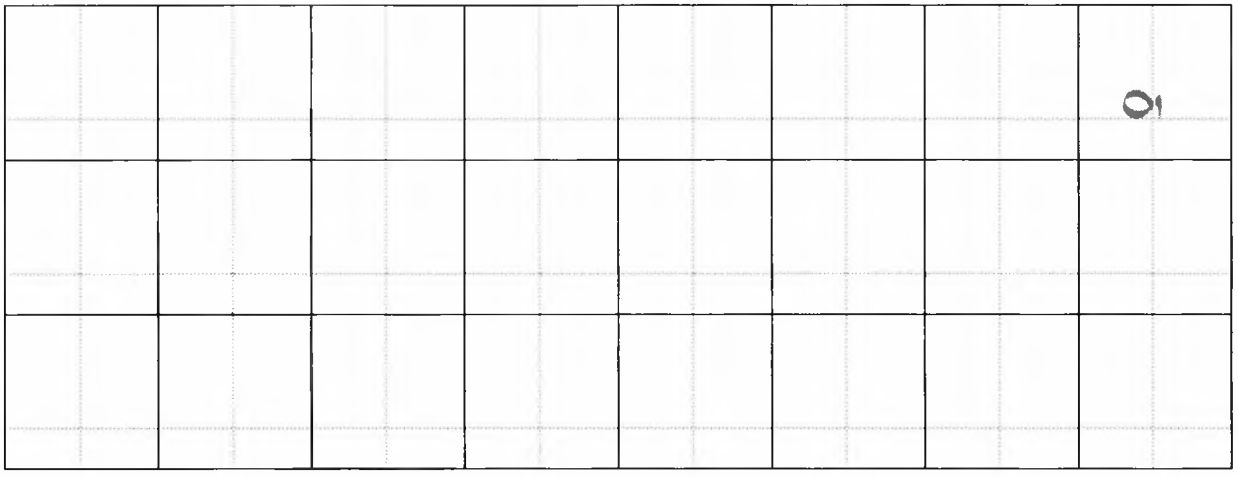

letter form

ס

equivalents

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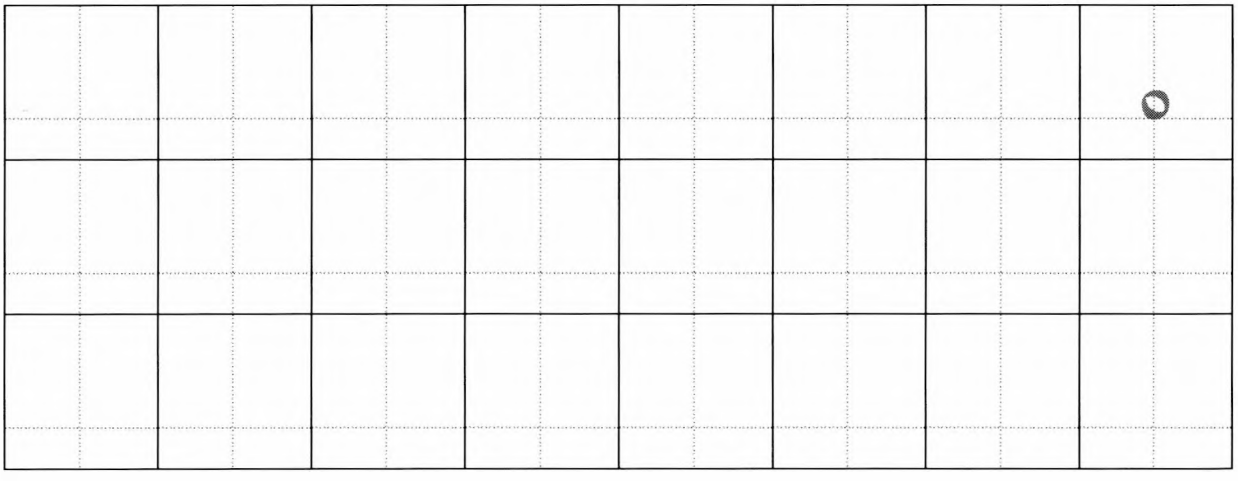

letter form

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equivalents

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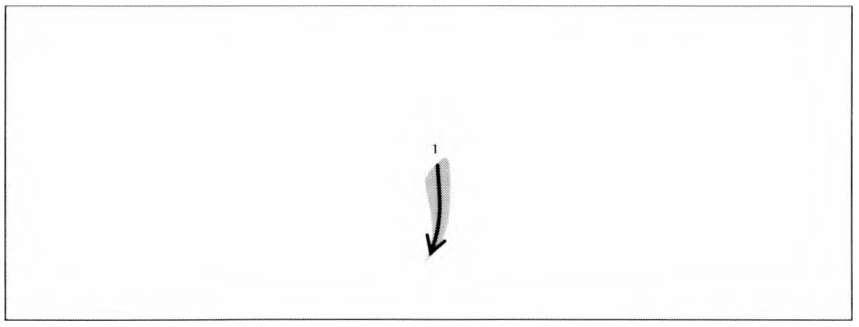

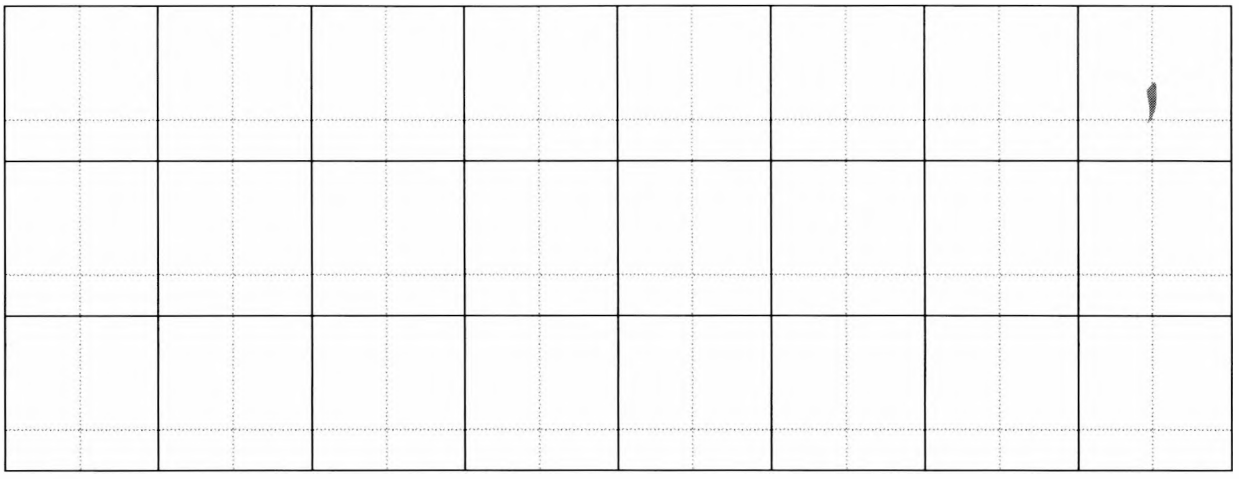

letter form

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equivalents

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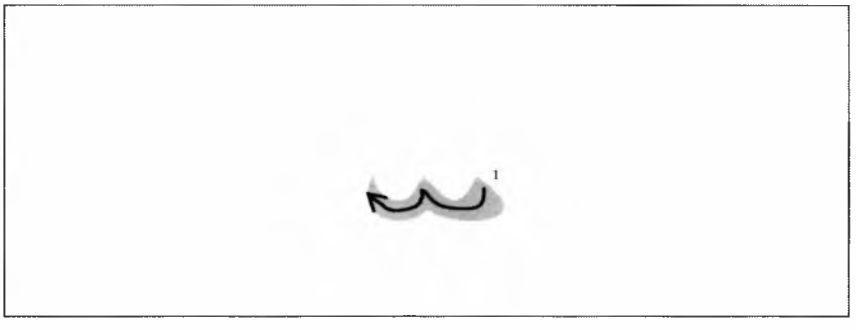

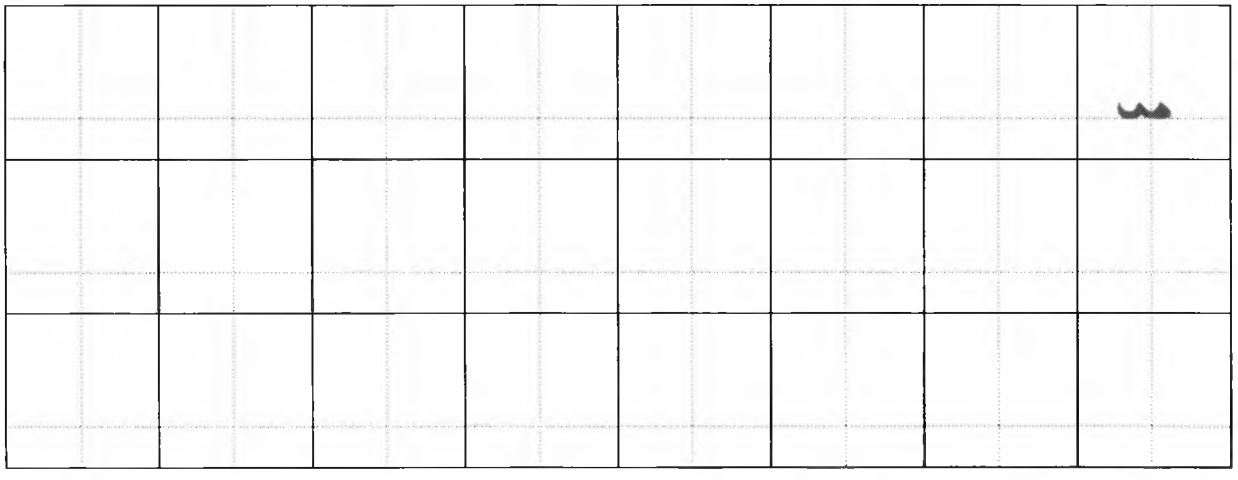

letter form

ʕ

Equivalents

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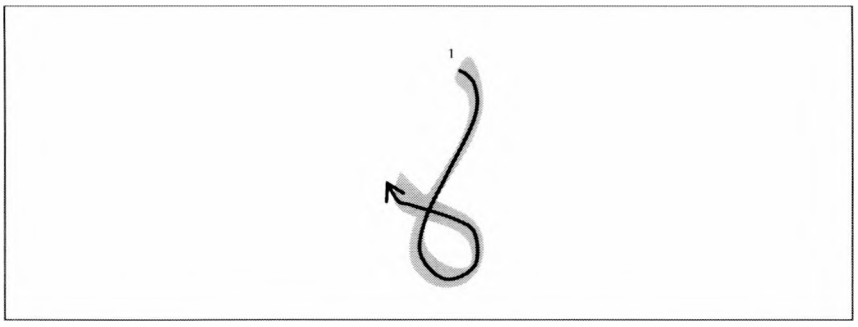

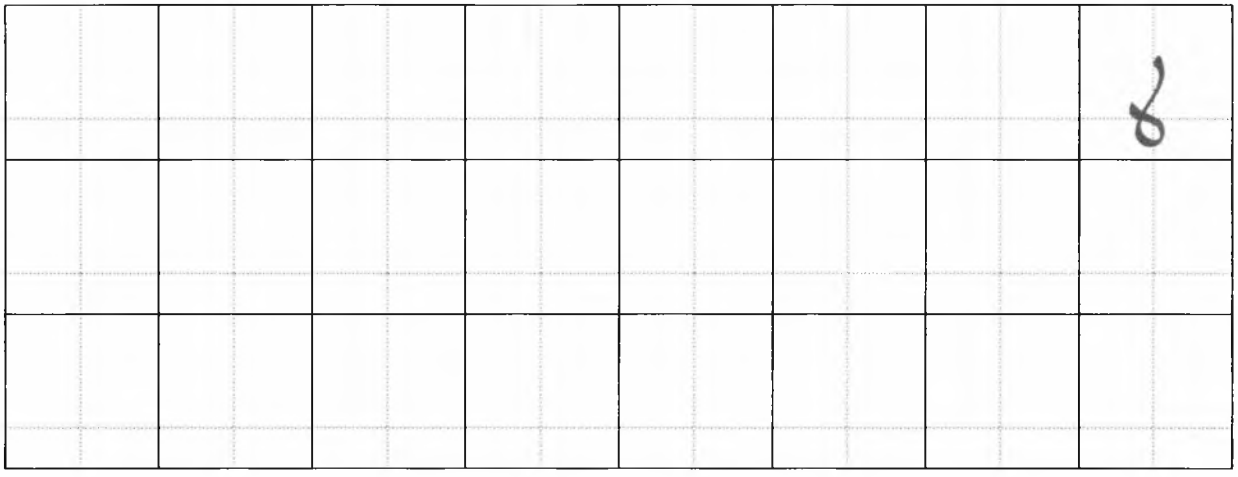

letter form

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equivalents

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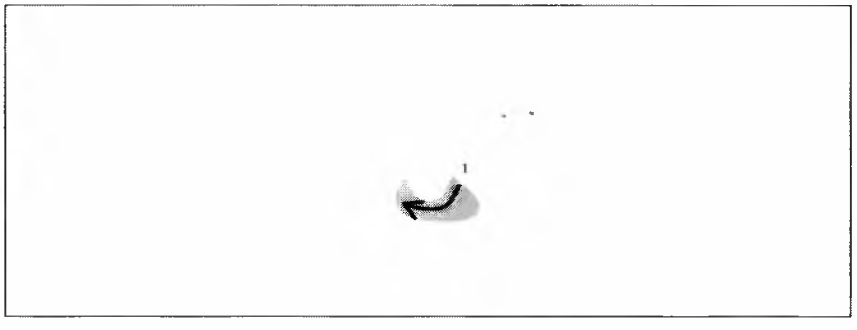

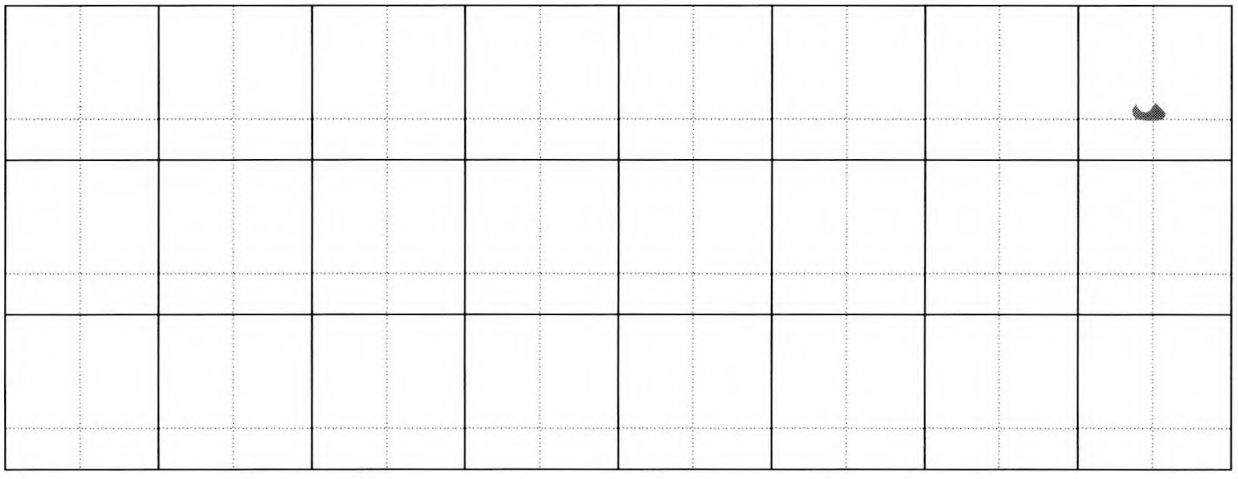

letter form

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equivalents

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letter form

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equivalents

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letter form

ל

equivalents

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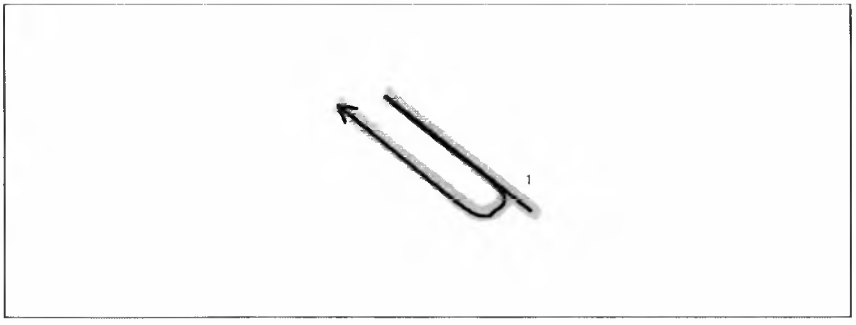

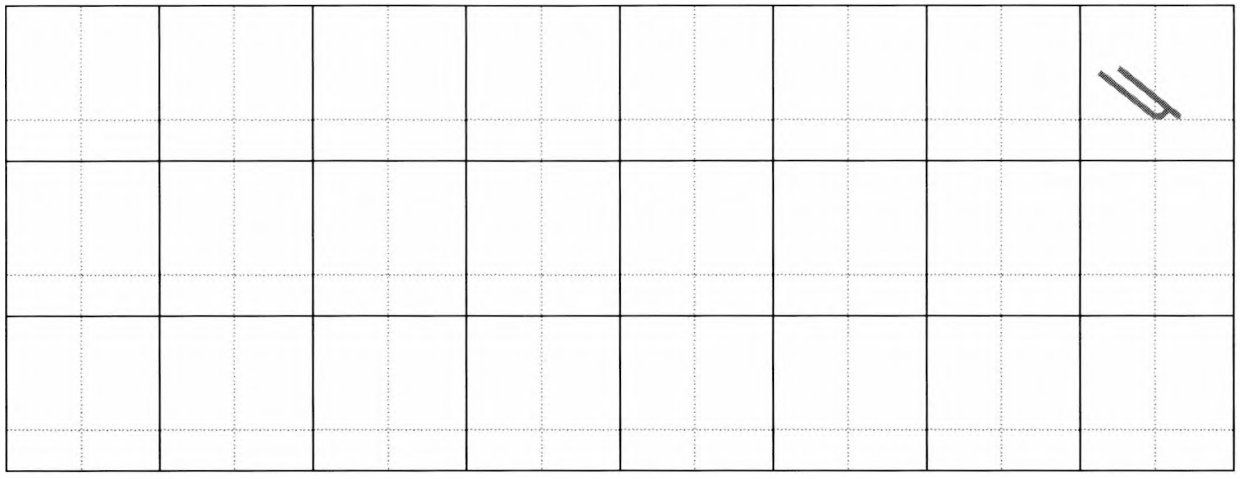

letter form

מם

equivalents

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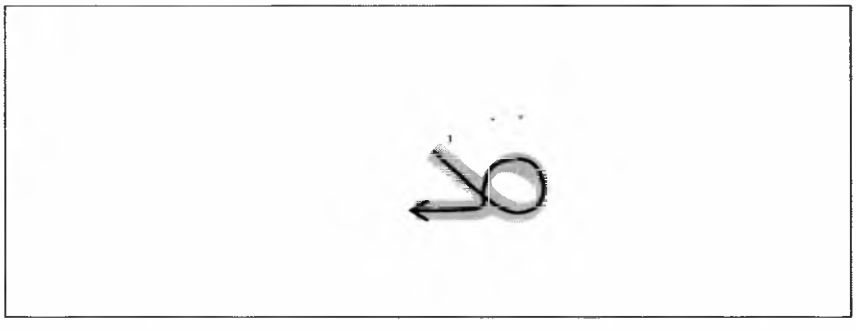

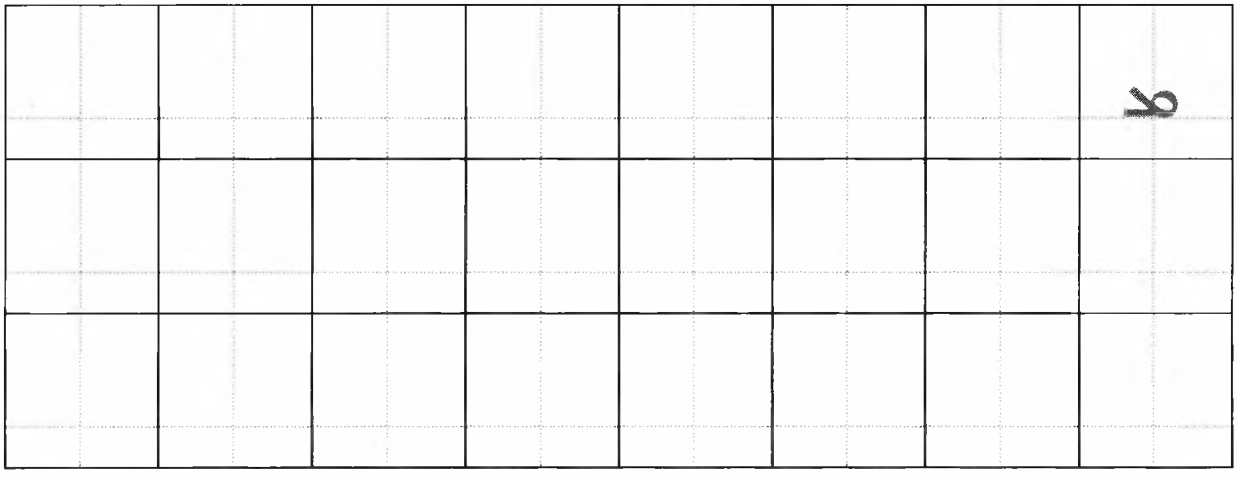

letter form

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equivalents

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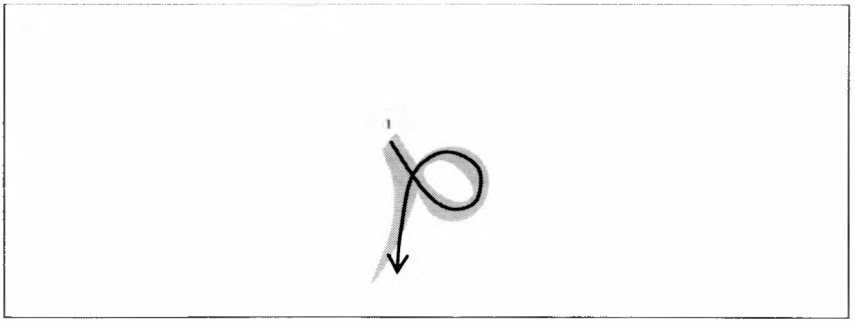

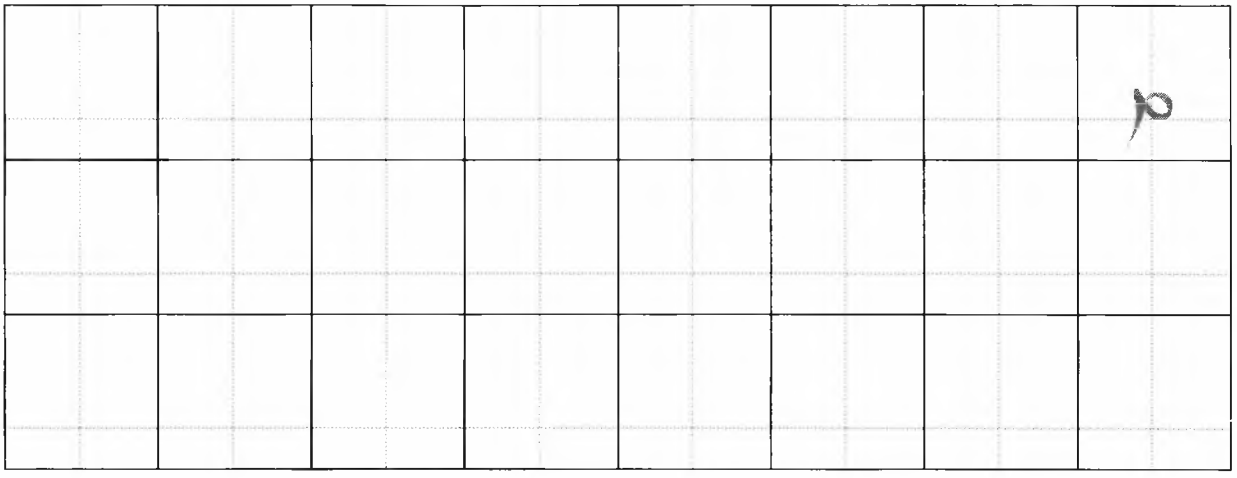

letter form

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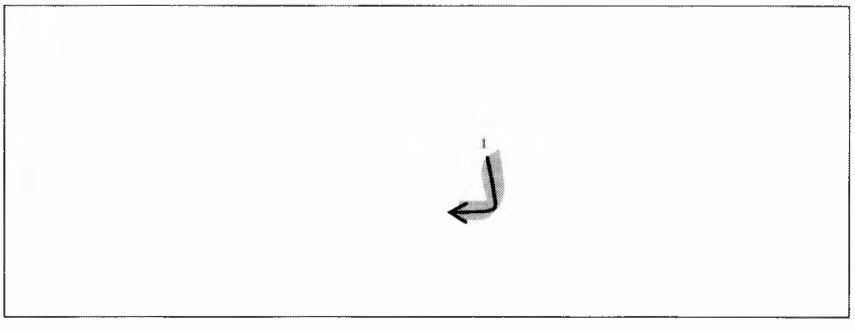

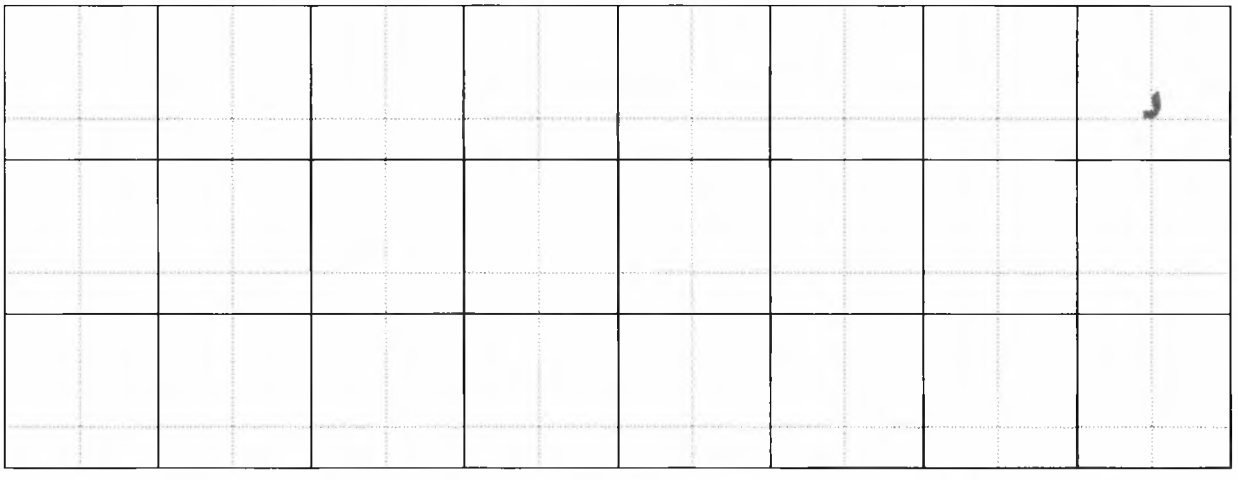

letter form

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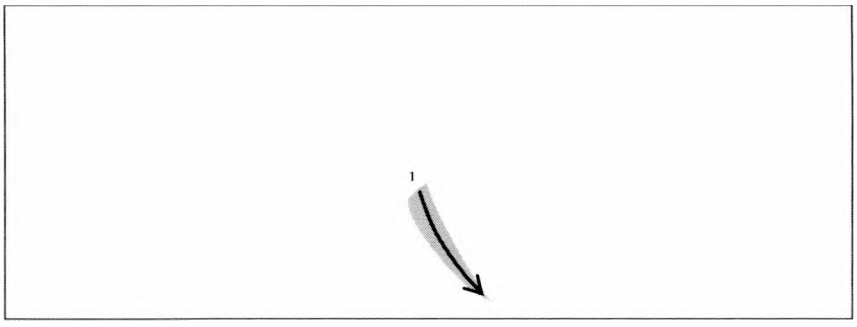

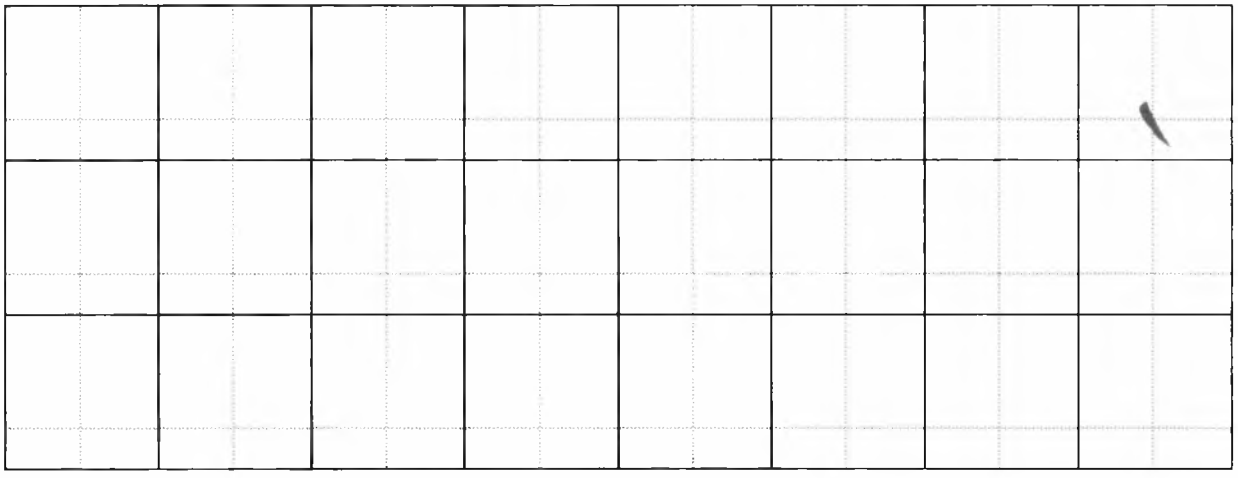

letter form

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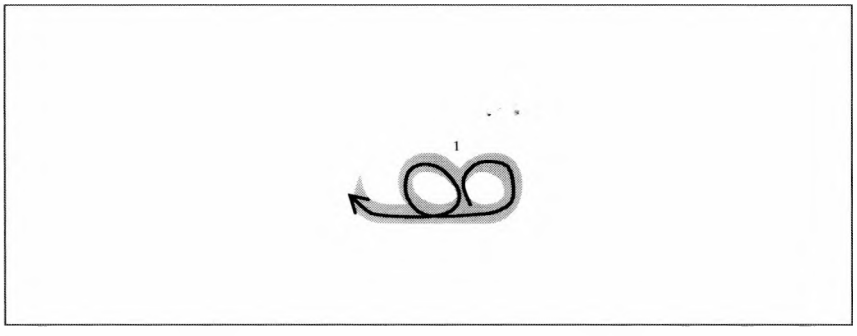

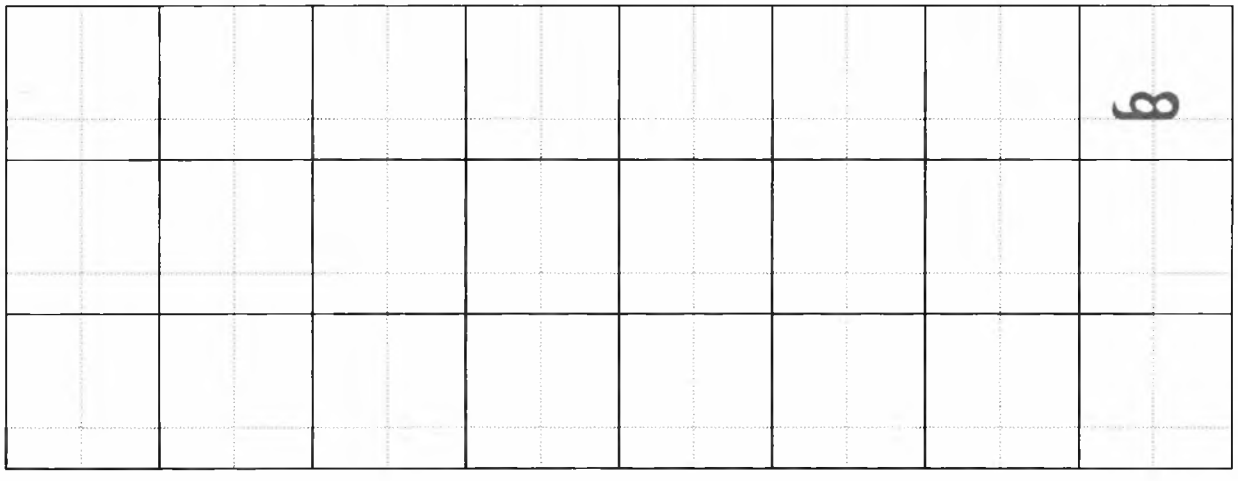

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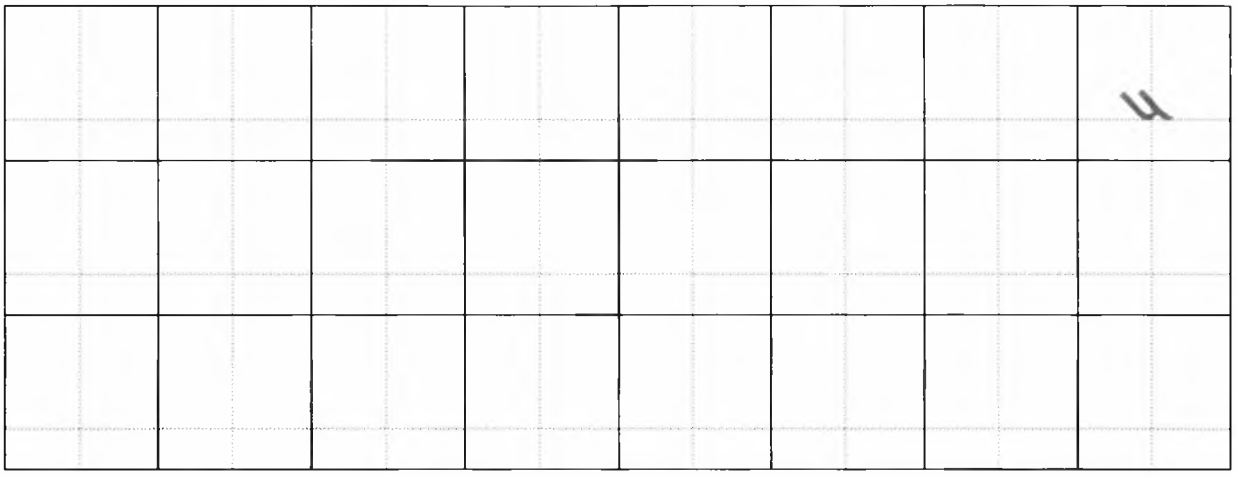

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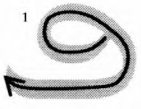

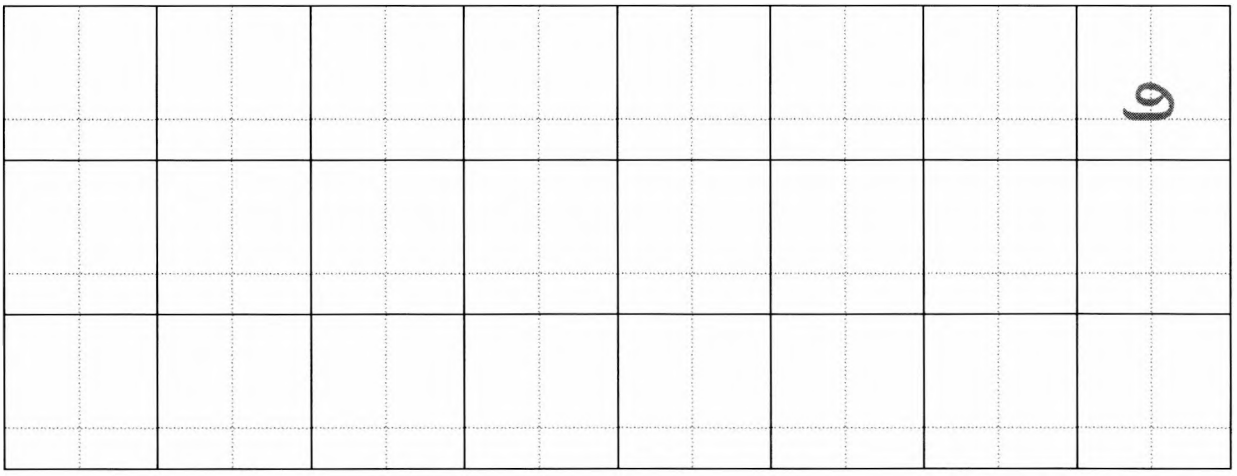

letter form

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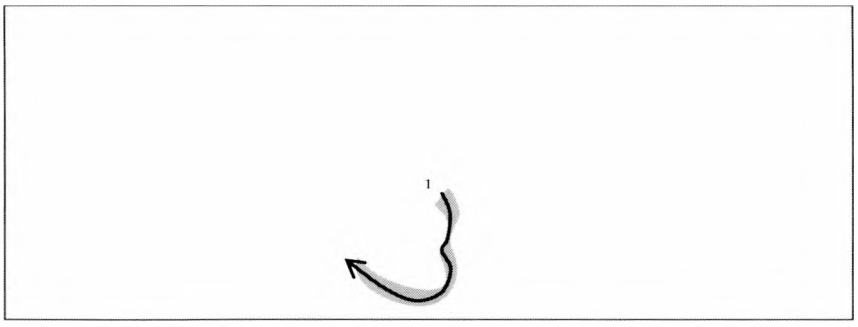

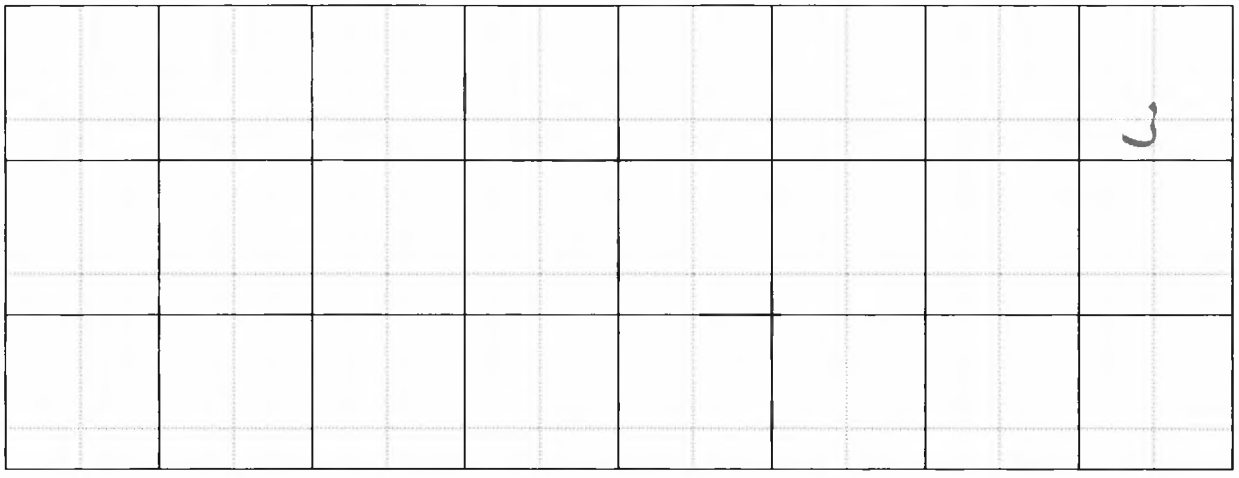

letter form

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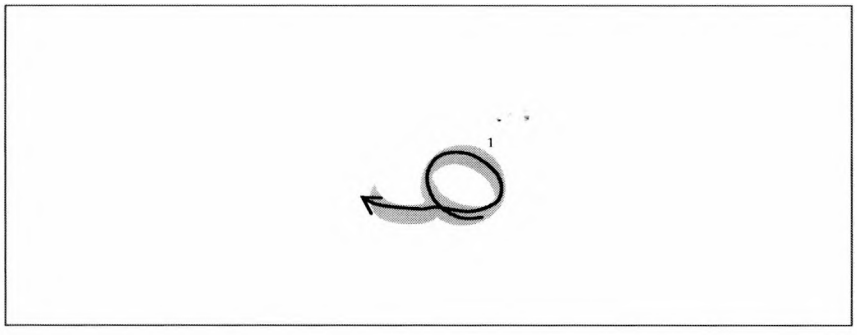

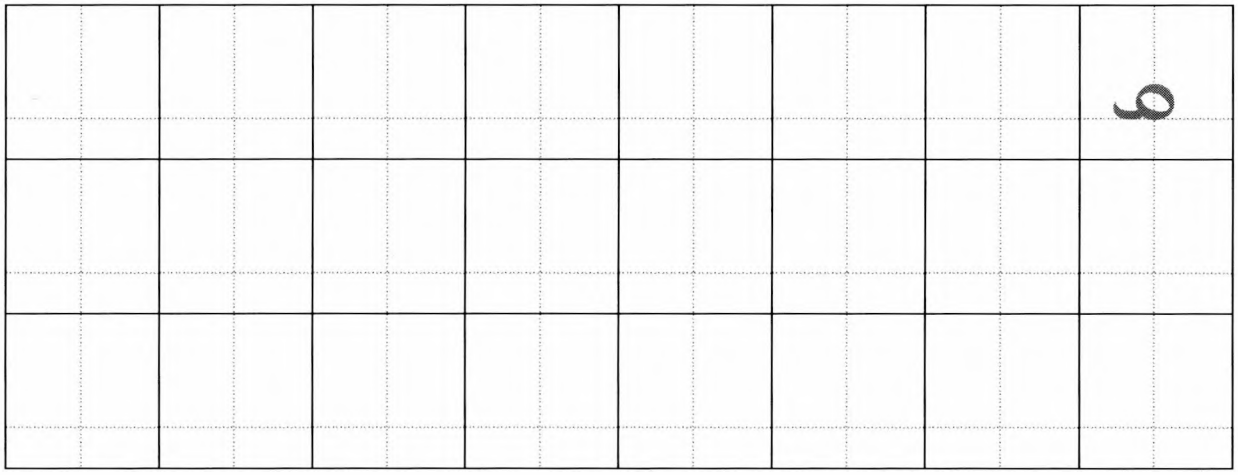

letter form

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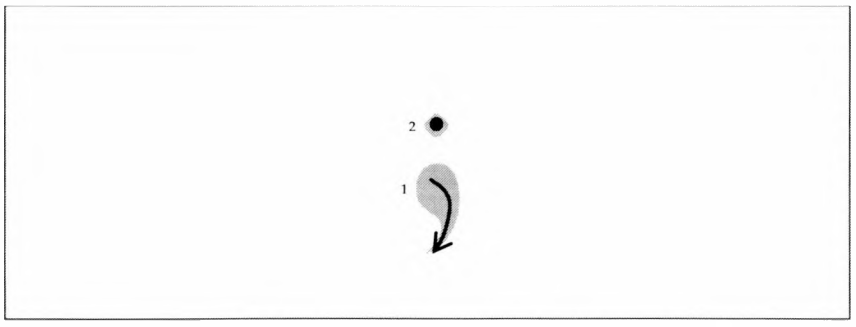

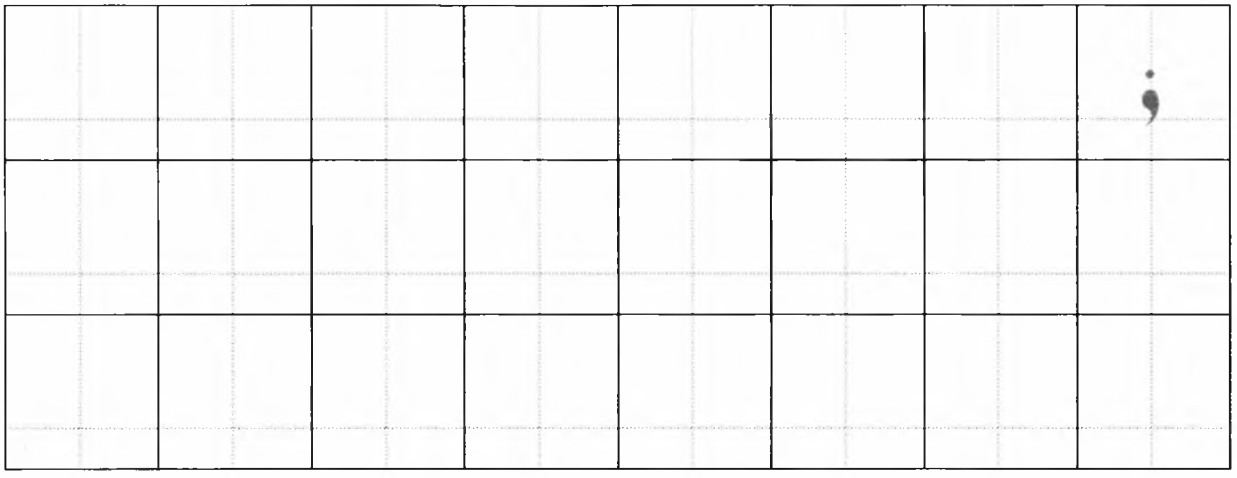

letter form

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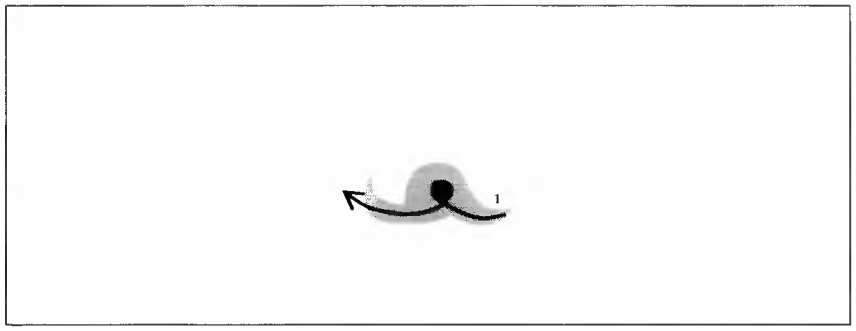

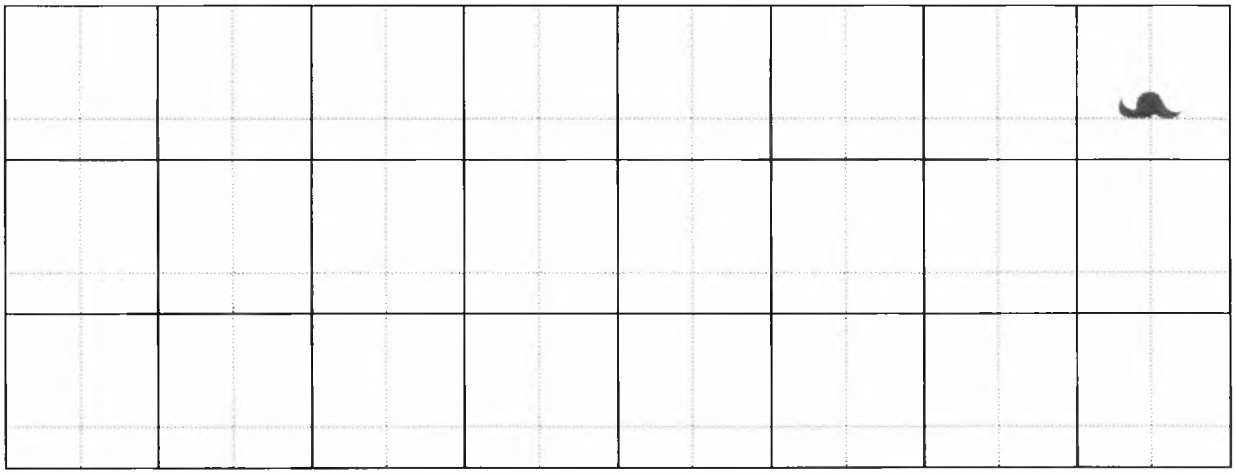

letter form

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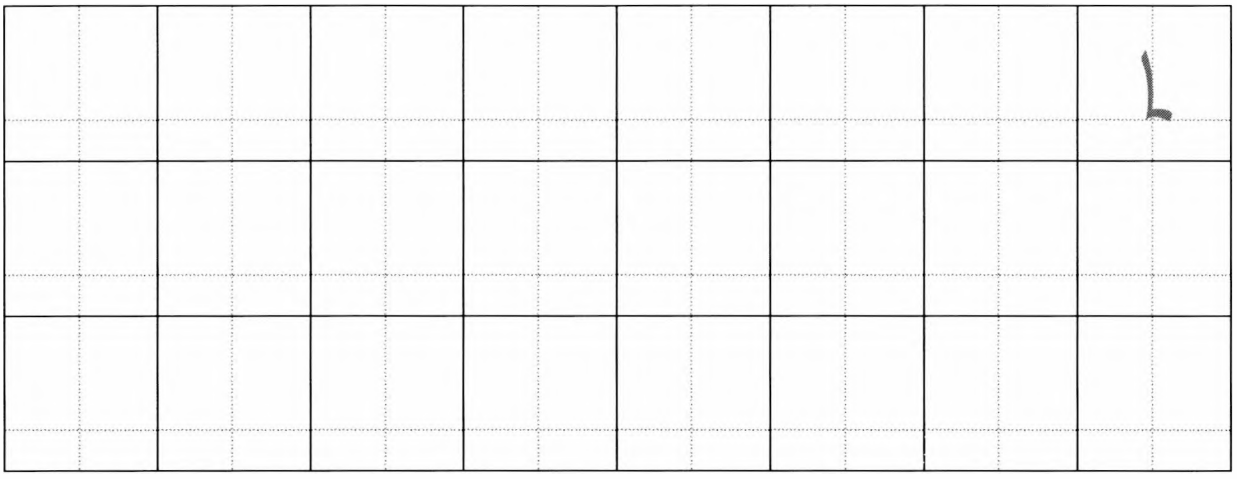

The Serto script developed during the Middle Ages to write Western Syriac. Western Assyrian Aramaic writings appear in the Serto script to this day. Western speakers pronounce the name of the classical script *Estrangelo,* which may also be used to write Western Syriac.

The same principles introduced for Estrangelo apply to Serto. Letters are written and read from right to left.

malko	ܡܠܟܐ	bar	ܒܪ
king	_____	*son*	_____

The Serto script includes spaces between words.

shlom(o) ʿlok	ܫܠܡܐ ܥܠܟ
peace be upon you (to male)	_____

The Serto script makes use of the same *matres lectionis* and consonant diacritics found in Estrangelo. Modern writers may mark soft consonants and silent consonants. The classical punctuation of the cursive script also applies.

shlom leḵy maryam.	ܫܠܡ ܠܟܝ ܡܪܝܡ ❖
Hail, Mary.	_____

Note that modern speakers use familiar punctuation marks, albeit flipped right-to-left. For example, the question mark is written "؟". The symbol ❖ now marks the end of a paragraph.

Medial and Final Letter Forms

Serto maintains the ligatures introduced for the Estrangelo script. The same letters join to their left. Also as in Estrangelo, joining letters tend to have a tail when written alone or at the end of a word.

sleq	ܣܠܩ	gaḇro	ܓܒܪܐ
he left	_____	*man*	_____

The letters *ṭeth* and *taw* have unique forms when they join to a previous letter. The letter *ṭeth* connects as ـطـ and taw as ـت.

l-ṭuro	لـطـورو	kṯab	كـتـب
to the mountain	_____	*he wrote*	_____

Unique final forms of the letters *kaph*, *mim* and *nun* appear in the Serto script.

shmok	شمـك	men	مـن
your name	_____	*from*	_____

The letters *lomadh* and *ʿey(n)* also have unique final forms: ـل and ـع. Their initial and medial forms contain a single diagonal line instead of two parallel lines.

shlomo	شـلـومـا	ʿayno	عـيـنـا
peace	_____	*eye*	_____

The letters *ʾolaph* and *lomadh* form unique ligatures. When *ʾolaph* precedes *lomadh*, they are written as two parallel diagonal lines. When *lomadh* precedes *ʾolaph*, they are written as two parallel vertical lines.

ʾaloho	ألـوهـا	lo	لا
God	_____	*no*	_____

Note that Western Syriac speakers not pronounce double consonants.

abo	أبـا
father	_____

Western Vowels

Western Syriac has a separate vowel system. The dots typical of Eastern vowel pointing are replaced by small vowel letters derived from Greek.

◌ً	a	bar	بـرً
		son	_____

◌	**o** *(originally* **ā***)*	yam**o**	ܝܰܡܳܐ
		ocean	_____
◌	**e**	sl**e**q	ܣܠܶܩ
		to leave	_____
◌	**i**	r**i**sho	ܪܺܫܳܐ
		head	_____
◌	**u**	sur**u**t	ܣܽܘܪܝܳܐ
		Syriac	_____

Western vowels may appear below letters instead of consistently above. In these cases, the vowel diacritics are flipped 180°. This happens with tall letters like *lomadh* and *taw*, but may occur with other letters.

l-ṭ**u**ro	ܠܛܽܘܪܐ	k**a**tab	ܟܰܬܰܒ
to the mountain	_____	*he wrote*	_____

Western vowels are not restricted to the Serto script. Syriac may be written in Estrangelo with western vowel marks.

The Eastern (Madnhaya) Script

letter form

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letter form

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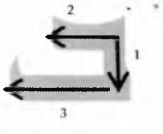

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letter form

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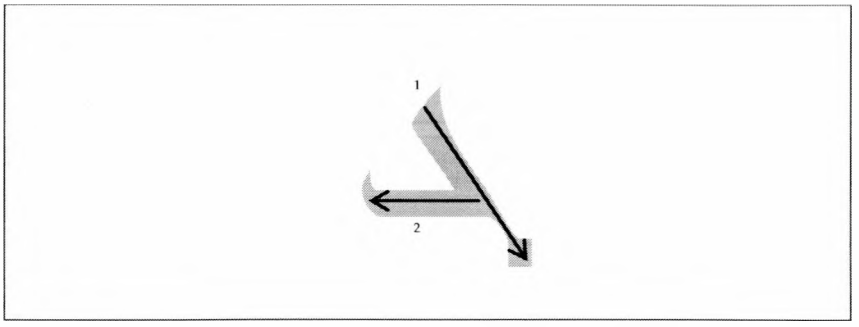

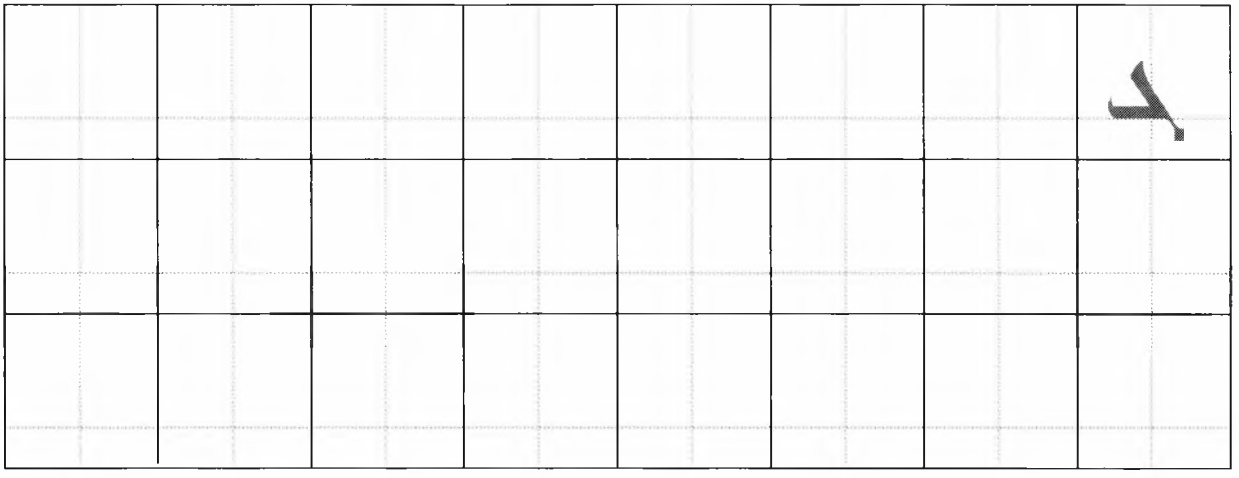

letter form

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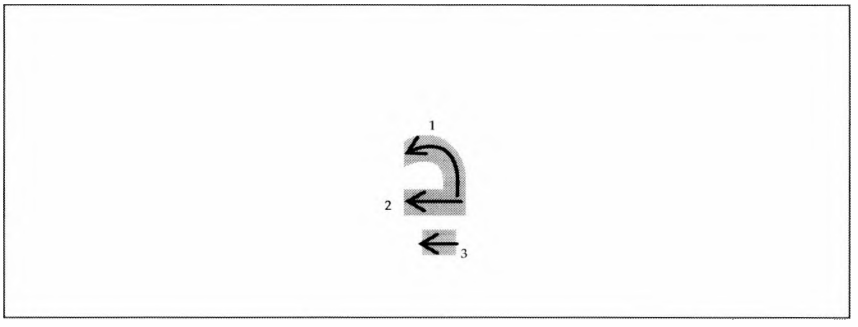

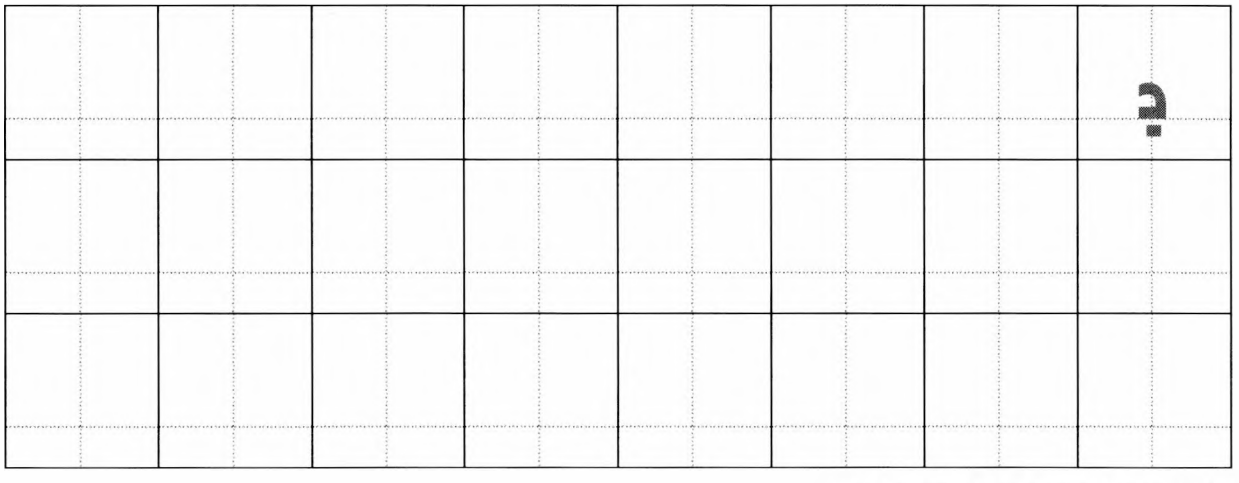

letter form

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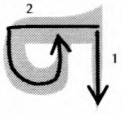

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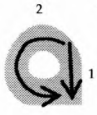

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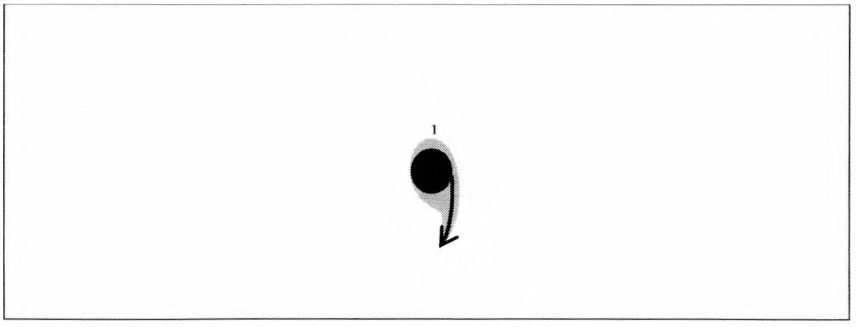

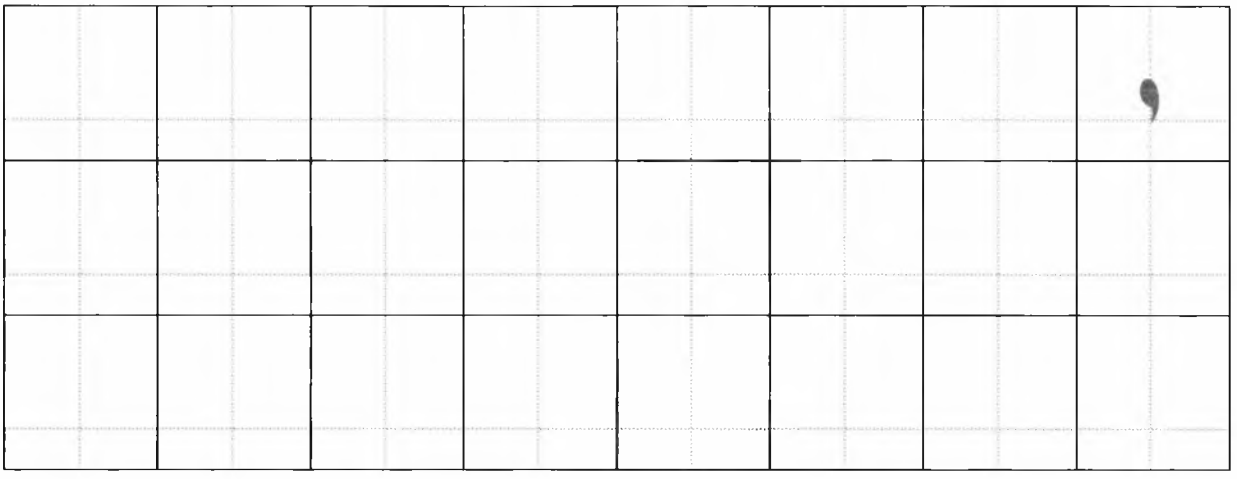

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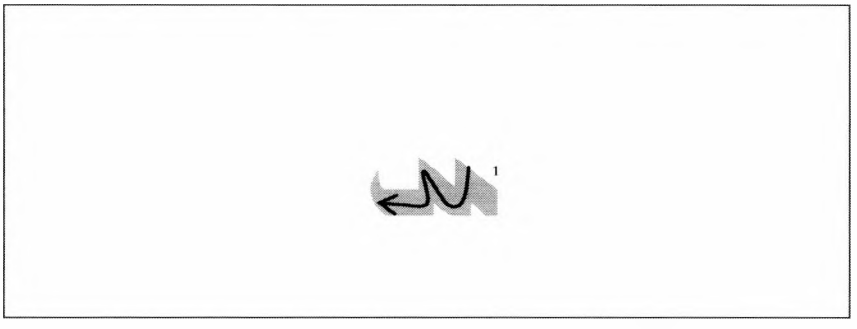

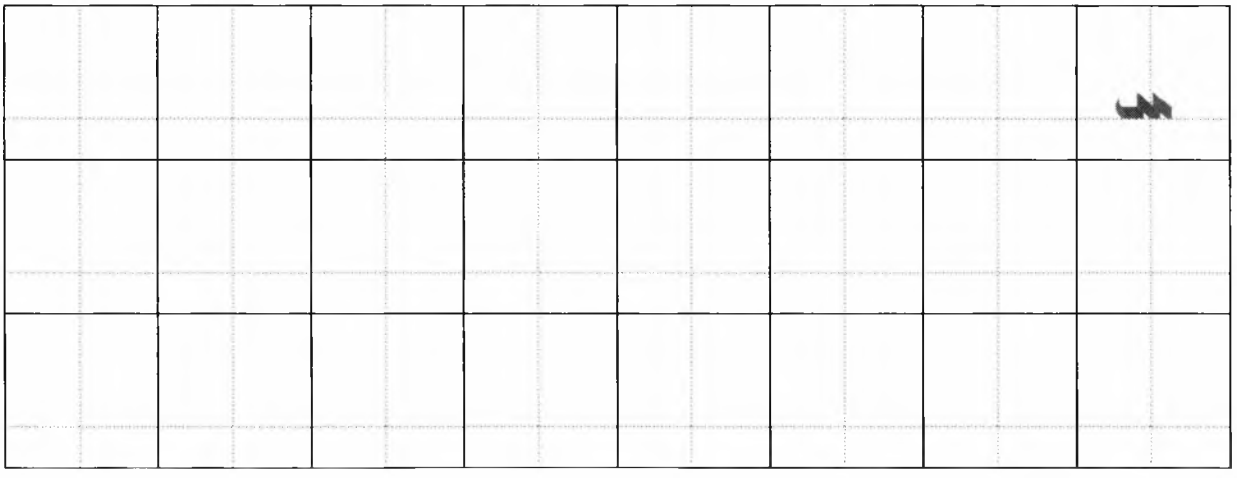

letter form

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Equivalents

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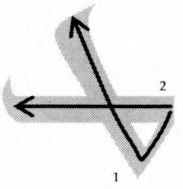

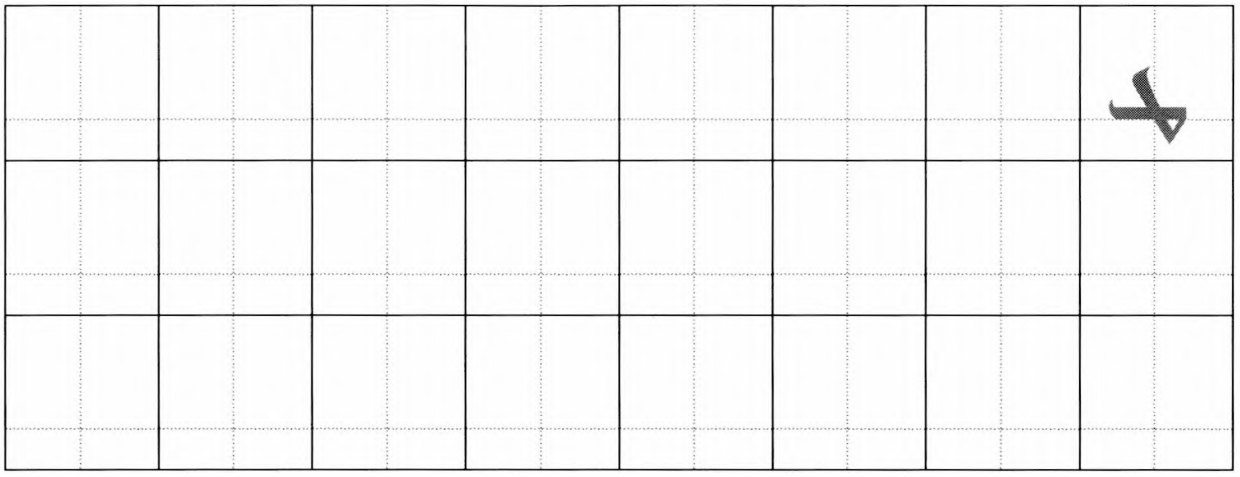

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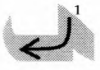

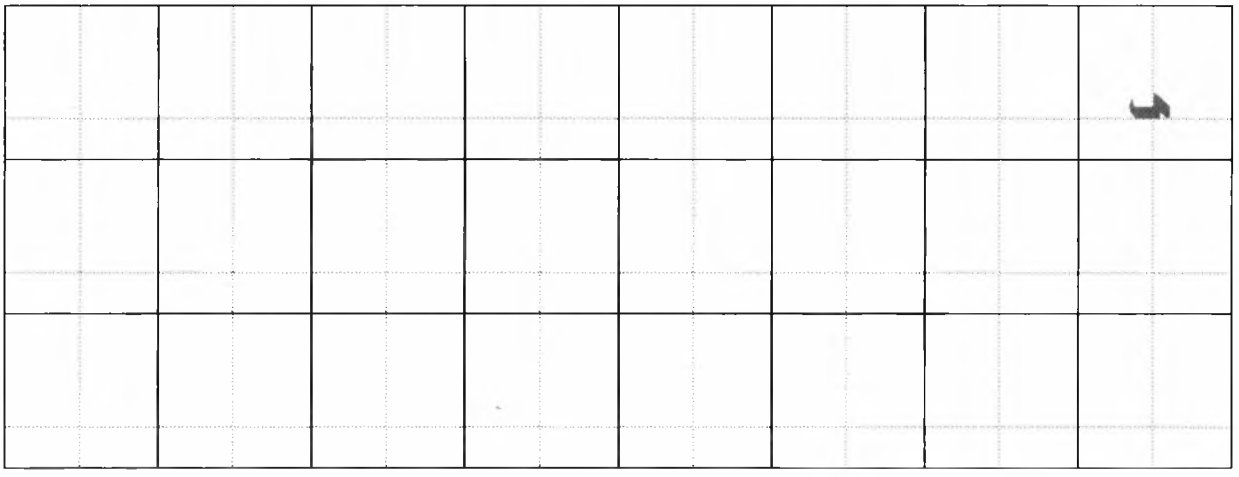

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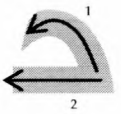

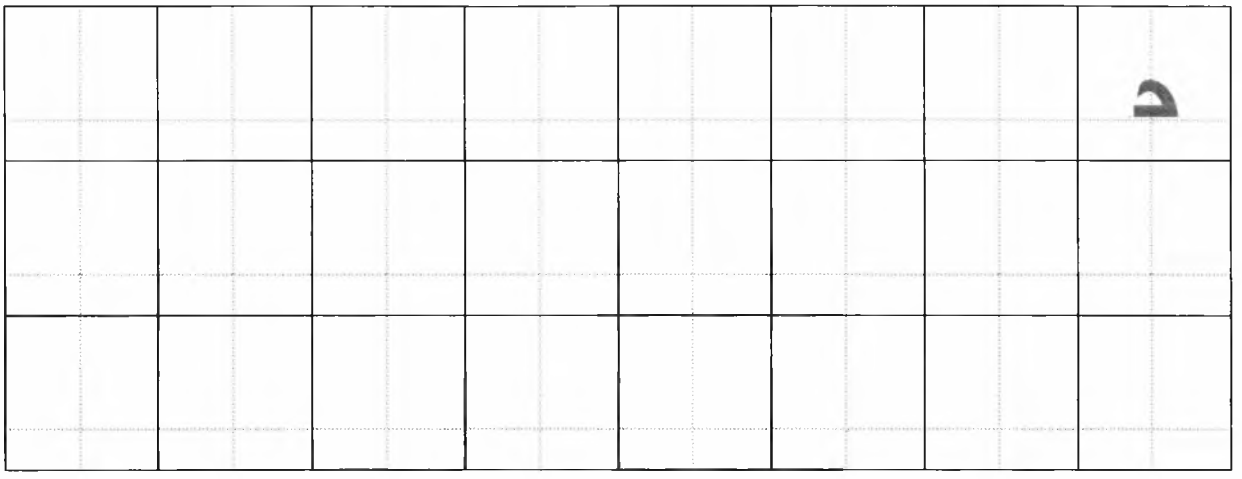

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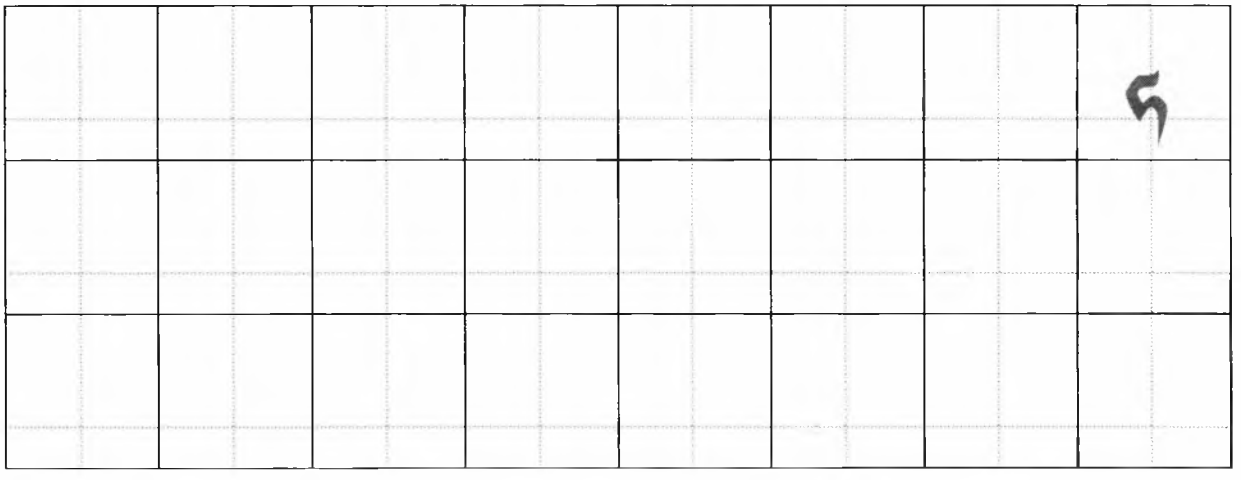

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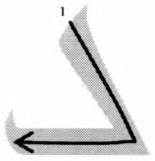

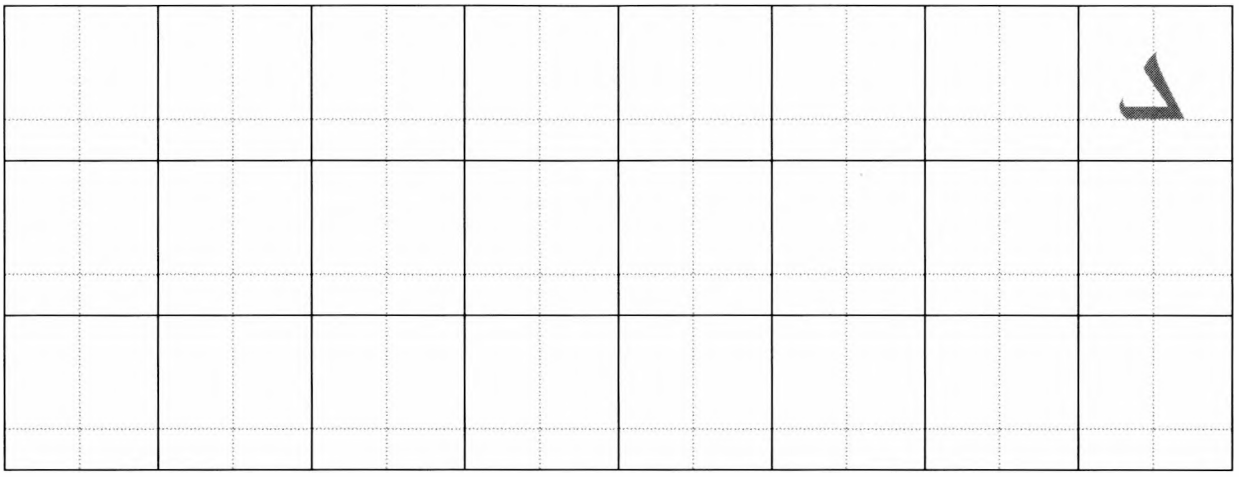

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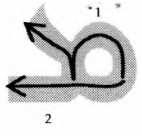

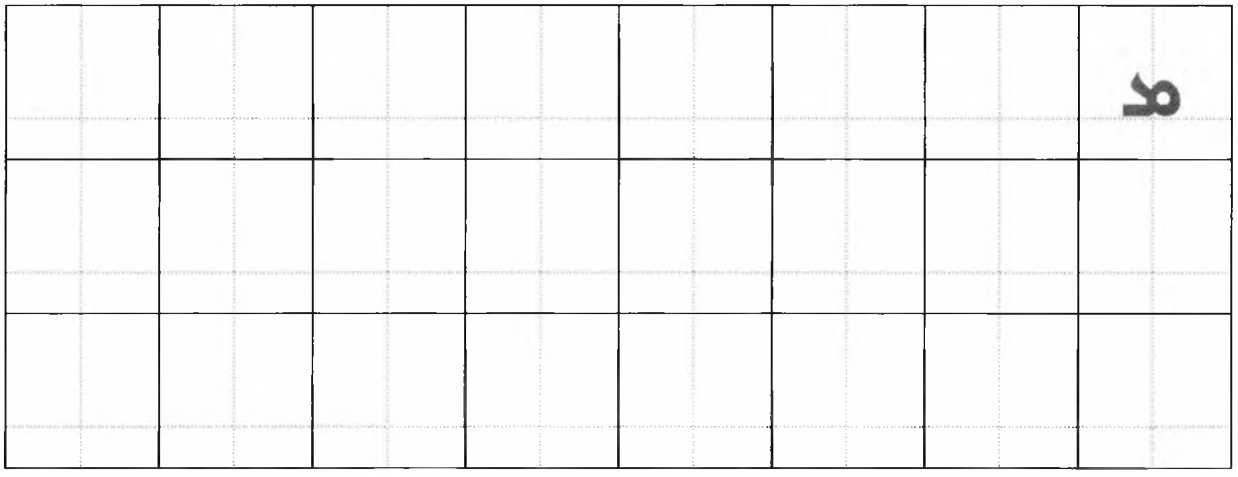

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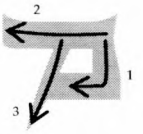

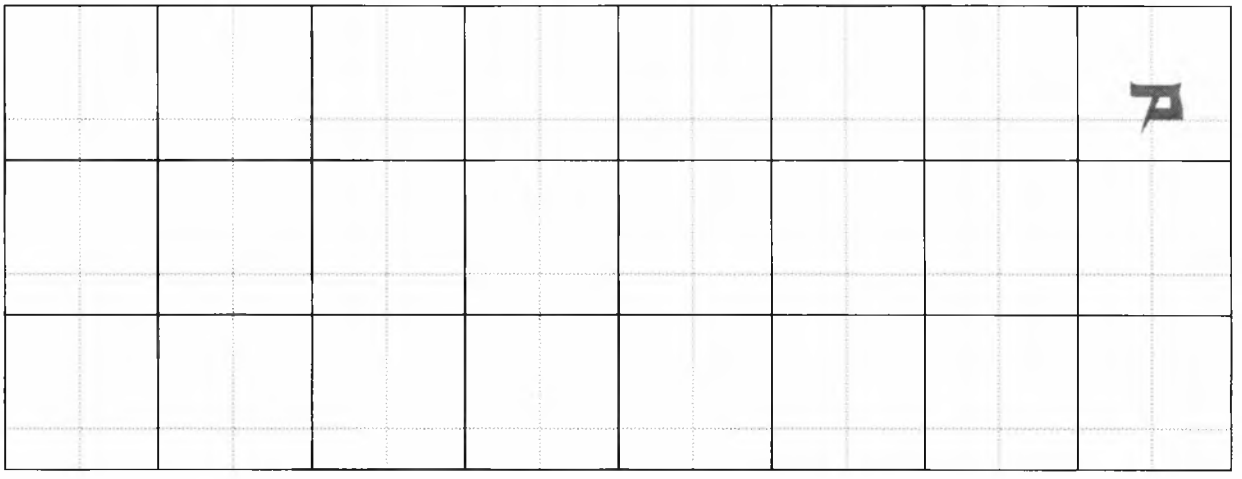

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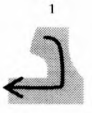

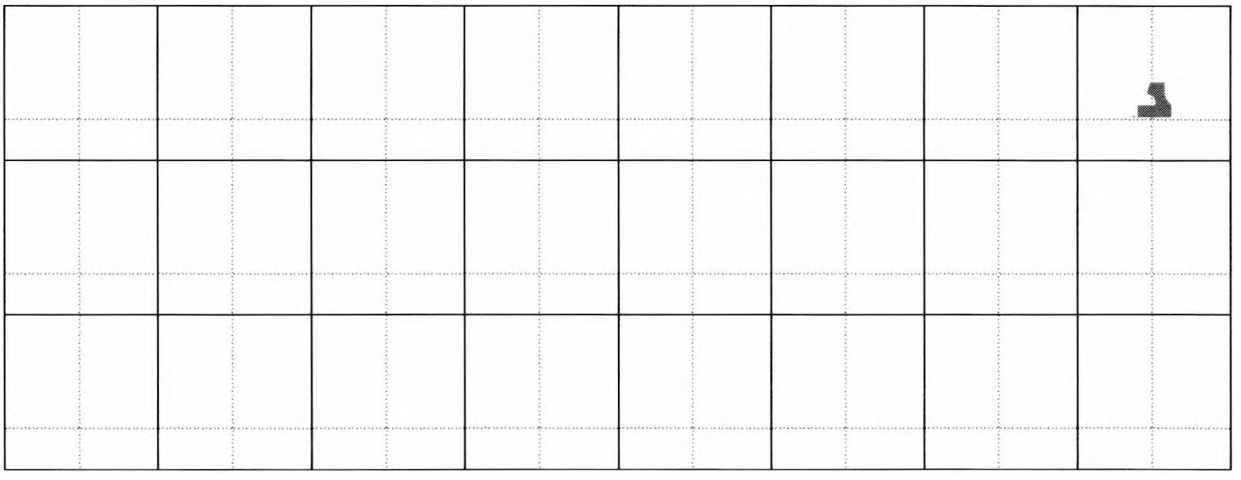

letter form

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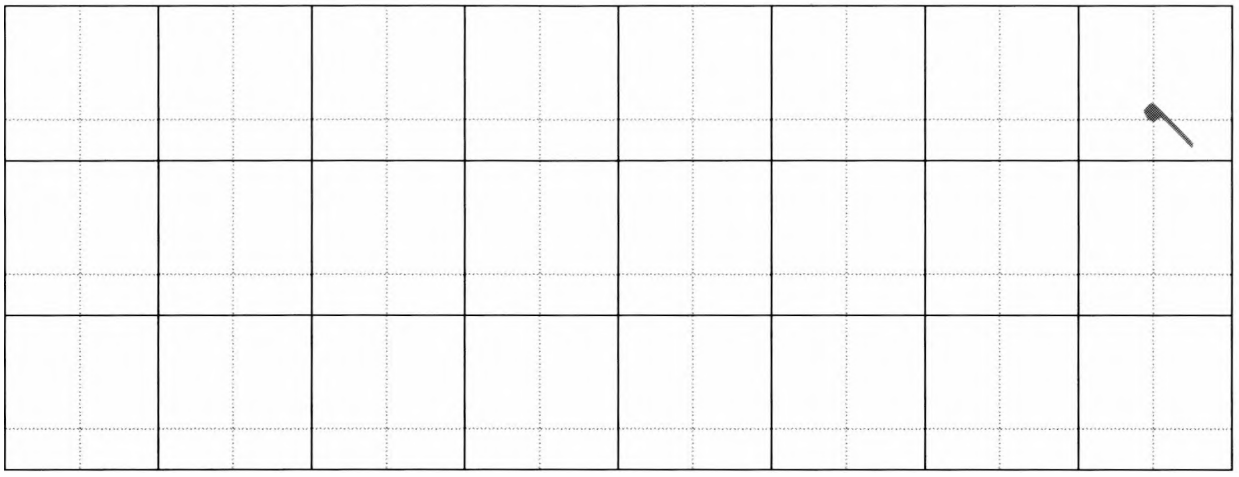

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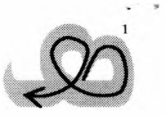

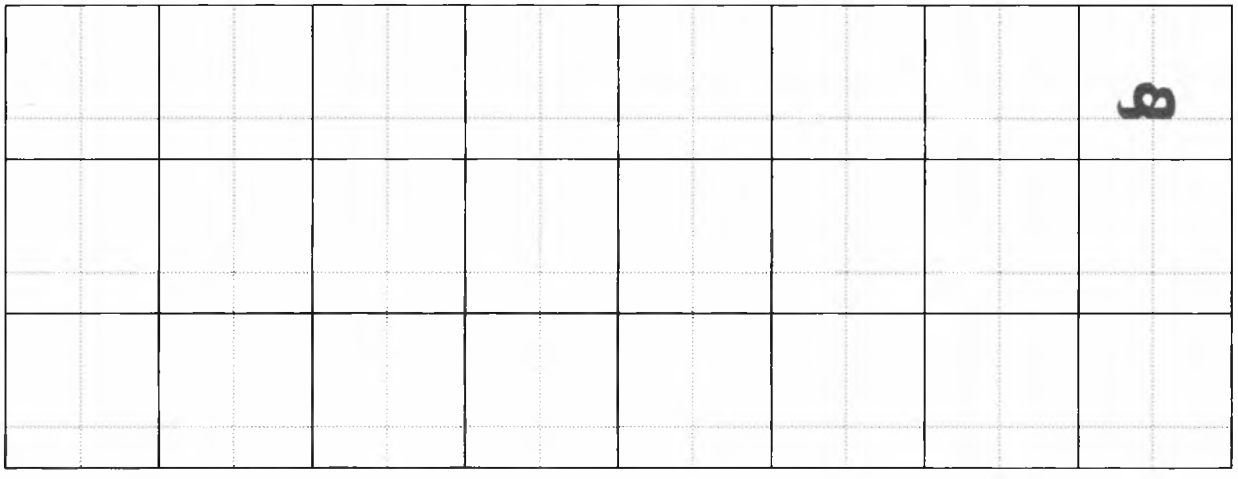

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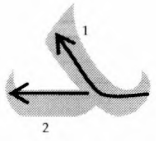

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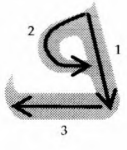

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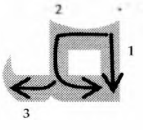

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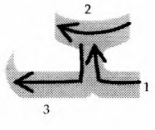

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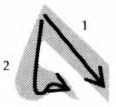

The Madnhaya (Eastern) script developed during the Middle Ages to write Eastern Syriac. Eastern Assyrian Aramaic appears in this script to this day. The same principles previously introduced for Estrangela apply to Madnhaya. Letters are written and read from right to left.

malkā	ܡܠܟܐ	duzutā	ܕܘܙܘܬܐ
king	_____	*truth*	_____

The Eastern script includes spaces between words.

shlāmā ʿlok̲	ܫܠܡܐ ܥܠܟ
peace be upon you (to male)	_____

The Eastern script makes use of the *matres lectionis* and consonant and vowel diacritics found in Estrangela. Modern speakers use familiar punctuation marks flipped right-to-left. For example, the question mark is written "؟". The symbol ۞ marks the end of a paragraph or verse.

shlāmā ʿlok̲.	۞ܫܠܡܐ ܥܠܟ
Peace be upon you.	_____

The Eastern script maintains the ligatures introduced for the Estrangela script. The same letters join to their left. The same letters may also form unique ligatures. As in Estrangela, joining letters tend to begin in an upstroke rather than a downstroke and have a tail when written alone or at the end of a word.

rishā	ܪܫܐ	ktab	ܟܬܒ
head	_____	*he wrote*	_____

Unique final forms of the letters *kap, mim* and *nun* appear in the Eastern script.

shmāk̲	ܫܡܟ	men	ܡܢ
your name	_____	*from*	_____

A wavy line turns ܠ and ܪ into ܠ *jammal* and ܪ *chap*. A half ring turns ܦ into ܦ *fe*.

Pronunciation Guide

Aramaic words are transliterated throughout this workbook to facilitate pronunciation. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is also used from time to time for clarification. The following guide will help you pronounce these sounds more accurately and consistently.

Consonants

IPA	Transliteration	Example
/ʔ/	ʾ	*uh-oh* ("catch" in throat)
/b/	b	***b**ook*
/g/	g	***g**o*
/d/	d	***d**o*
/h/	h	***h**appy*
/w/	w	***w**ick*
/z/	z	***z**ebra*
/ħ/	ḥ	/h/ while pushing root of tongue against pharynx
/tˤ/	ṭ	/t/ while pushing root of tongue against pharynx
/j/	y	***y**es*
/l/	l	***l**ate*
/m/	m	***m**eal*
/n/	n	***n**ot*
/s/	s	***s**ake*
/ʕ/	ʿ	as voiced /ħ/
/p/	p	*s**p**ace*
/sˤ/	ṣ	/s/ while pushing root of tongue against pharynx
/q/	q	/k/ with tongue further back (against uvula, not soft palate)
/r/	r	trilled ***r***
/ʃ/	sh	***sh**ake*
/t/	t	*s**t**ay*
/x/	ḫ	like Scottish *lo**ch*** (back of tongue against soft palate)
/χ/	ḫ	like Scottish *lo**ch*** (back of tongue against uvula)
/tʃ/	ch	***ch**ain*
/dʒ/	j	***j**am*

Soft Consonants

/v/	b *or* v	***v**ain* or ***w**ine*
/ɣ/	g *or* gh	as voiced /x/
/ð/	d *or* dh	***th**is*
/x/ ~ /χ/	k *or* kh	see /x/ and /χ/ above
/f/	p *or* ph	***f**ine*
/θ/	t *or* th	***th**ing*

Vowels

IPA	Transliteration	Example
/ə/	ɔ	*about*
/a/	a	like *father* but closer to Spanish *casa*
/a:/	ā	as /a/ but held long
/e/	e	*sets* or shortened *they*
/e:/	ē	as /e/ but held long
/i/	i	*sit* or shortened *sing*
/i:/	ī	as /i/ but held long
/o/ ~ /o:/	o	*so* but shortened for /o/ or held long for /o:/
/u/ ~ /u:/	u	*soon* but shortened for /u/ or held long for /u:/

Answers to the Exercises

Exercise 1

1.	madbaq	*welding*	מדבק
2.	hadās	*Edessa*	הדס
3.	ṣrar	*to tie up*	צרר
4.	ptaq	*to throw*	פתק
5.	nṭal	*to carry*	נטל
6.	ḥagag	*to feast*	חגג
7.	ṭlal	*to cover*	טלל
8.	shnaq	*to strangle*	שנק
9.	ʿal	*(up)on*	על
10.	lbēsh	*to be dressed*	לבש

Exercise 2

1.	בֵּיתָא	*house*	*transliteration:* bētā
2.	טְעֵים	*to taste*	*transliteration:* ṭəʿēm
3.	זוֹנָרָא	*belt*	*transliteration:* zonārā
4.	בוּעָתָא	*abscess*	*transliteration:* buʿātā
5.	חוּרְפָן	*young lambs*	*transliteration:* ḥurpān
6.	אִתְכַּדֵּין	*be shown false*	*transliteration:* ʾitkadēn
7.	sīʿa	*to assist*	סִיַּע
8.	yāylā	*hedgehog*	יָיְלָא
9.	barzəlā	*iron*	בַּרְזְלָא
10.	ʿātak	*to be old*	עָתַק
11.	qīqeltā	*ruins*	קִיקֶלְתָא
12.	ṣuqtā	*distress*	צוּקְתָא

Exercise 3

1.	ʾithkadēn	*be proved wrong*	אִתְכַּדֵּין
2.	qīqeltā	*ruins*	קִיקֶלְתָּא
3.	bēthā	*house*	בֵּיתָא
4.	ḥurphā	*young lamb*	חוּרְפָּא
5.	dəmā	*blood (Classical)*	דְּמָא
6.	dəmma	*blood (Modern)*	דְּמַא
7.	yallolīn	*monsters*	יַלּוֹלִין
8.	lāvān	*white*	לָבַן
9.	ḥāshakh	*be reduced*	חָשַׁךְ
10.	buʿāthā	*abscess*	שְׁלַבִּין

Exercise 4

1.	bas	*seeing as*	ܒܰܣ
2.	ʾādāb	*gentle*	ܐܳܕܳܒ
3.	ser	*mystery*	ܣܶܪ
4.	ktab	*to write*	ܟܬܰܒ
5.	shal	*shawl*	ܫܰܠ
6.	ʾāmret	*you think so*	ܐܳܡܪܬ
7.	ʿal	*(up)on*	ܥܰܠ
8.	tbaʿ	*to follow*	ܬܒܰܥ
9.	sleq	*to leave*	ܣܠܶܩ
10.	lbesh	*to put on (clothes)*	ܠܒܰܫ

Exercise 5

1.	ܐܰܝܠ	*family*	*transliteration:* ʾayl
2.	ܡܘܪܐ	*myrrh*	*transliteration:* morā
3.	ܛܢܦܬܐ	*unclean*	*transliteration:* ṭaneptā

4. ܐܝܠܝܢ *which ones?* *transliteration:* ʾaylēn
5. ܦܫܚܐ *to be glad* *transliteration:* pṣāḥā
6. ܡܠܟܘܬܐ *kingdom* *transliteration:* malkutā
7. duktā *place* ܕܘܟܬܐ
8. pāk *pure* ܦܟ
9. bērzā *land* ܒܝܪܙܐ
10. lāʾoṭā *swearer* ܠܐܐܘܛܐ
11. ʿazizā *ferocious* ܥܙܝܙܐ
12. ṣilāh *quietude* ܨܠܚ

Exercise 6

1. ṣāwṯā *voice* ܨܘܬܐ
2. mellāw*hy* *his words* ,ܡܠܘܗܝ
3. ʾa*n*tton *all of you* ܐܢܬܘܢ
4. jārchī *town crier* ܓܪܟܝ
5. demmā *blood* ܕܡܐ
6. malkuṯā *kingdom* ܡܠܟܘܬܐ
7. hāḏē *this (feminine)* ܗܕܐ
8. hwārā *white* ܚܘܪܐ
9. gappē *threats* ܓܦܐ
10. ṭanpāṯā *unclean ones* ܛܢܦܐܬܐ

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LANGUAGE

Learn to write the major Aramaic scripts in this practical workbook for beginners. From the early alphabet to the standard Jewish square and Christian cursive scripts, this handy guide contains everything you need to master the foundations of identifying, reading and writing the various Aramaic scripts.

Learn to write individual letters and see how to modify those letters with vowel and consonant diacritics. Build on this knowledge as you write words and phrases in the copy exercises and transliteration activities. All along the way, the workbook offers ample space and opportunity to practice writing the language.

A range of exercises and copy sheets cover all of the letter forms and diacritics required to read and write Aramaic. Copy sheets provide Aramaic names of letters and characters, pronunciation and transliteration, and the number and direction of pen strokes needed to compose each character.

The content of the book focuses on the Judeo-Aramaic square script and the Estrangela cursive script, then covers the Early Aramaic, Imperial Aramaic, Herodian, Hebrew cursive, Western Serto and Eastern Assyrian scripts. These materials are backed up by a comparative chart of Aramaic alphabets, a pronunciation guide, an index and answers to the exercises.

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